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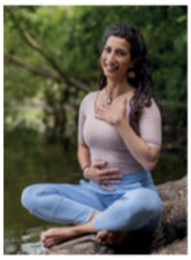

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Welcome

You gotta love the summer! Now that it's June, it's time to head outside and soak up the big miracle that is the natural world in all its magnificent splendour. Put your phone down, put your sandals on, and head for the great outdoors!

Listen out for birdsong, walk barefoot on the grass if you can, or just perch in a spot with a nice view and enjoy a few blissful minutes of mindfulness. Getting out and about in nature is like a free and instant detox.

But when you're back indoors….it's time to read OM magazine! This month, we've got lots of amazing inspiration and yoga positivity to fire your practice both on and off the mat. Just brew up a cup of herbal tea and dive right in.

Inside, we're continuing our build-up to the OM Yoga Show in London this October, where you can meet some of the world's top yoga stars and say hi to the OM team. Read all about this month's cover star, Sally Talal, as well as Luisa Bradshaw-White, aka DJ LuluOm, who creates a wave of music that is euphoric, shamanic, tribal and fun! You'll find them both at Europe's biggest yoga event at Alexandra Palace, from October 13-15th.

There's a guide to yoga teacher training inside this month too, so if you're looking for a career change, or you just want to step up your practice and immerse yourself in a yoga training, then this is the issue for you.

Also remember folks that June 21st is officially International Day of Yoga around the globe, so look out for free events and classes wherever you are. And whatever you're doing, have fun doing it! Let the yoga guide your way.

Martin

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OM in 30 seconds

Amazing SPACES

THE AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF MEDITATION AND YOGA

Head Down Under for a glimpse into the Australian School of Meditation and Yoga, where you'll find an authentic, holistic approach to the ancient practice.
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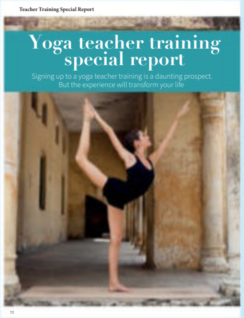
OM talks to yogi and spiritual teacher, Sadhguru, the founder and head of India's Isha Foundation, which has touched the lives of millions worldwide.
Sadhguru: Man On A Mission, Page 48

Sadhguru
man on a mission


Teacher Training Special Report

Yoga teacher training special report

Signing up to a yoga teacher training is a daunting prospect. But the experience will transform your life

Looking to get into yoga teaching? Look no further than our teacher training guide with insight and information from some of the country's top teachers.
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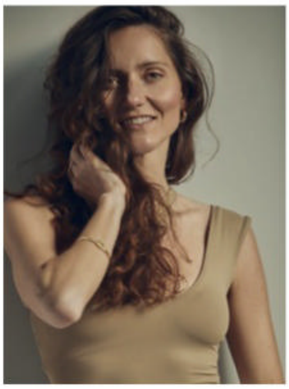
Sarah Ezrin

Sarah is an author, world-renowned yoga educator, content creator, and mama based in the San Francisco Bay Area, who loves guiding people along their wellness and parenthood journeys. Her words, classes, and social media are supportive, healing spaces where people can feel seen and heard. Her debut book The Yoga of Parenting is out this summer. Find out more at: **sarahezrinyoga.com**

Ro Huntriss

Ro is a leading fertility dietitian and published academic author in the field of fertility nutrition. She is a founding member of the Maternal and Nutrition Specialist Group of the British Dietetic Association and is passionate about sharing evidence-based information to support women and men on their journey to conception and beyond. Ro published her first book, Deliciously Healthy Fertility, in March 2023. Visit: **dietitianro.co.uk**



Sofia Sundari

Sofia is an author, transformational facilitator, spiritual mentor and and runs online programmes and in-person immersions with a focus on empowered living, erotic embodiment and spiritual refinement. Sofia's teachings are focused on assisting people to live a life of totality, to trust completely, to love fully, to jump into life without a safety net. Find out more at: **sofiasundari.com**

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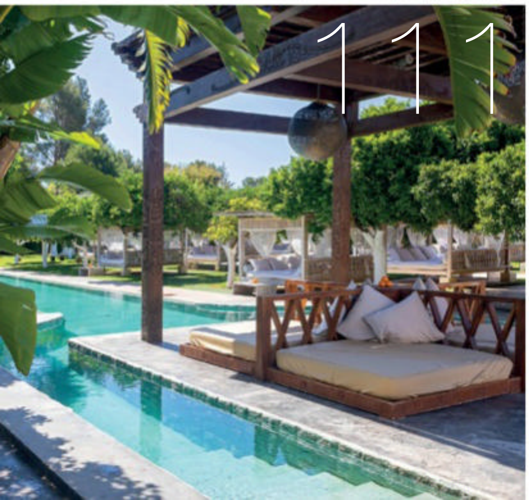

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This month, OM's annual guide to everything you
need to know about yoga teacher training.
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My *secret* place

Yogi: Anna Coates

Photographer: Hester Barnes

Location: West Wittering, West Sussex, England

The photo shows Anna Coates enjoying the fresh air and natural beauty of the coast at West Wittering in West Sussex.It's a special place for her. “The beach is always and forever my happy place,” she tells OM. “After first discovering yoga many moons ago in Sydney, Australia and having the opportunity to enjoy retreats in Thailand and Bali, I feel such a strong connection to practicing near water or on the sand. Now we are back in the UK, West Wittering is our closest beach and we love to visit in all seasons — whatever the weather!” The secret, however, is in the dunes. “Away from the hustle and bustle of the main drag, the long stretch of sandy dunes offers peace and tranquility; a quiet spot to feel the sun on your face and a place to sit and let the sea lull your thoughts back to balance.”

N@maste

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Ageing gratefully

I read your feature 'Ageing gratefully' in the April 2023 issue. The article was a well-written and helpful article on the menopause — and yes, that's a marker on life's journey, generally regarded as a feature of middle age. But what about after that? I am fast approaching 76 and have practiced yoga since I was 58. I long since left behind the hormonal challenges of the menopause and now I'm grappling with the wider dimensions of getting old. Where is your advice for that life stage? We may be a minority but there are folks in many yoga classes I've enjoyed who are elderly. If yoga truly is for every body then let's demonstrate that!

Perthshire Daisy

Ageing gratefully

Learning how to age gracefully…and gratefully. How yoga can help with changes in a woman's body, mind, and heart in the wisdom years. **By Desi Bartlett**

Our relationship with ageing is often adversarial — ageing is seen as something that we must 'fight' or 'combat'.

In 2021, the anti-ageing industry generated $60 billion worldwide, and that's predicted to double by 2030. Many of the creams, serums, and procedures that are marketed, focus on women.

The wording on these advertising for these products can send a subtle message that ageing is connected to fear and shame. We are often told that we need to pull, tuck, and smooth our skin and bodies.

But what if we could reframe this point of view, and remember that we are indeed beautiful because we have reached a certain age, filled with wisdom and a lifetime of experiences? What if gratitude and celebration could become the new buzz words associated with ageing?

This time of life can be associated with coming into our full power, our full ability to use our voices and become our own best advocate.

Advocating for health — and not only for anti-wrinkle creams — is a proactive step in ageing gratefully. Treating the body, mind, and heart with respect and care can not only improve our health, it can also create a paradigm shift for women around the world.

Looking at women's health through the lens of feeling good, and not just looking a certain way, requires a consideration of the changes that happen in our bodies after the age of 40. It is usually around this age that we enter perimenopause, which is the transition into menopause. Perimenopause can last up to eight years, and is associated with declining levels of oestrogen, as well as several other changes in a woman's endocrine system.

To help mitigate some of the effects of the declining levels in oestrogen, some women are prescribed hormonal replacement therapy (HRT).

It is important to note that women's health is not 'one size fits all', and not all women can tolerate the side effects of HRT, which for some, can be worse than the symptoms associated with the menopausal transition.

While symptoms can vary from woman to woman, three of the most common complaints during this stage of life include: hot flushes, sleep disturbances, and weight gain. This particular trio of symptoms is often a cascade effect in that a woman might have a hot flush in her sleep, which awakens her from rest. Once a woman is awake, there is then a disruption in her sleep pattern, and it is often challenging to go back to sleep. With this disturbance in sleep comes a disruption in her normal eating schedule, and often a craving for sugar to help her

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Keep in touch

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STAR LETTER

Returning to me

I read your article about reconnecting to yoga after lockdown (April 2023) and it made me cry, I think mainly from relief that someone else felt like me. Up until October 2021, I was working as a nurse so worked throughout lockdowns. By August 2021, I felt burnt out so I applied and got a job working from home thinking it would help me reconnect with myself and allow an improved work-life balance. This did not happen. I found myself becoming more disconnected and I struggled to do my daily practice and meditation. Then between May and August 2022, I lost six very close family members, which led to what I thought at the time was depression. I took time off from work and started on anti-depressants.

Life appeared to be getting back to normal, so I came off the medication which seemed to clear my head. I think I had been hiding: my world had shrunk, I did not want to socialise, and when I did, I started to drink alcohol to cope with being out. I had no motivation for anything. I'd been attending class once a week, but this was not helping as I was trying to force myself, and then thinking I'd failed.

So two weeks ago I sat quietly by myself when I realised how unhappy I was and that I needed to reconnect with my life again. I have handed my notice in at work, which was a weight off my shoulders. I have returned to yoga classes and have let myself be a beginner; not to throw myself into poses, but to be at the lowest level to 'feel' the poses and the power of yoga again. I feel a different person. Reading the article made me realise it's not just me.

I think the mental health implications of the pandemic and lockdowns will be with us for a long time but I don't think they are being recognised enough by health professionals or even by ourselves. Thank you for such an amazing article.

Helen, by email

Yoga fix

I have to say that I love reading OM Yoga magazine, I read it cover to cover (which I've never done with a magazine). I've just given birth, so getting back into yoga is a struggle at the moment, but this gives me a good fix of inspiration and things to learn about yoga, both off the mat, and when I'm ready to start again.

Jade, by email

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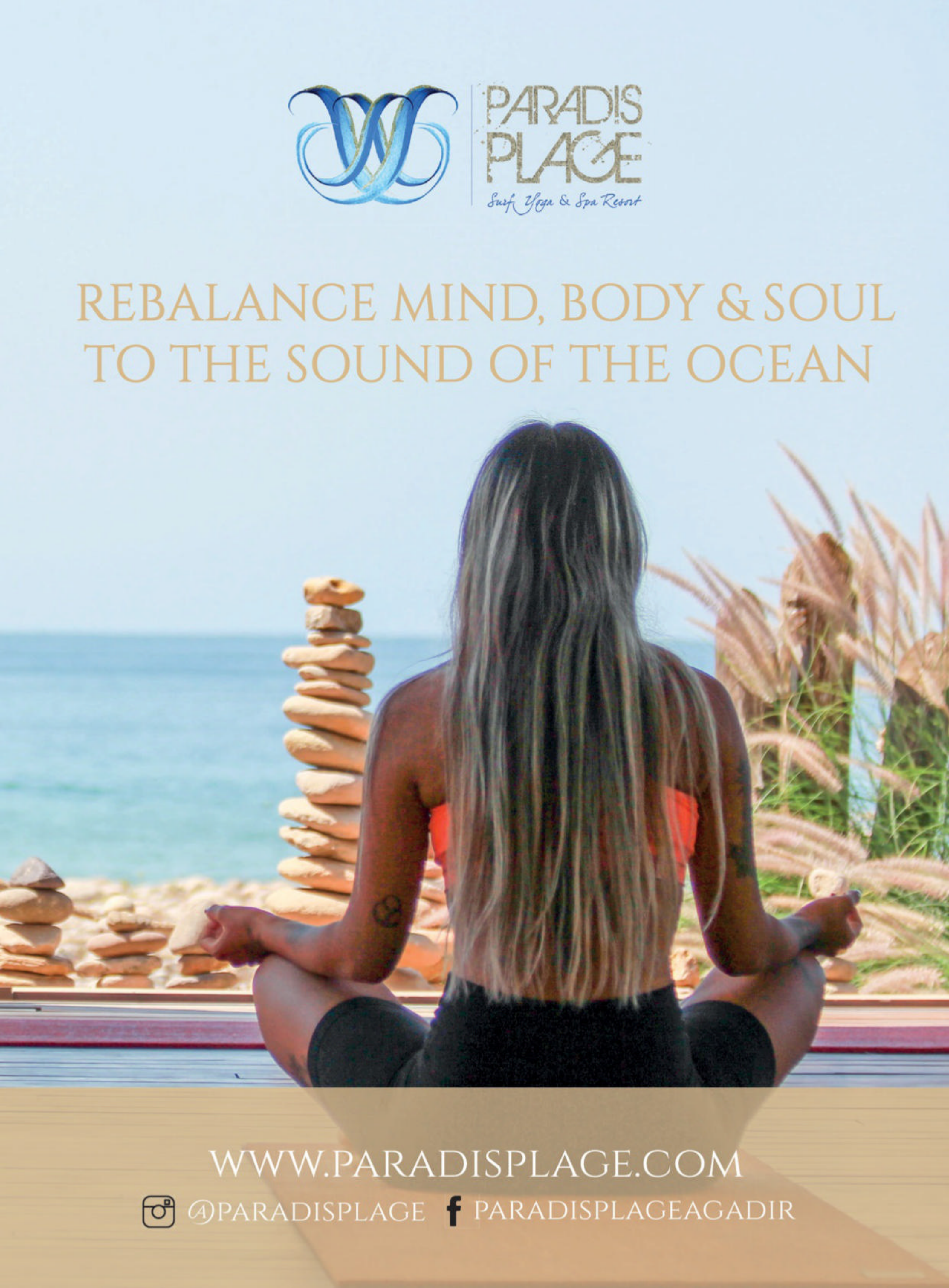
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YOGA changed my life

Lorna Chapman set up Luna Yoga & Health in 2003…and she hasn't looked back since

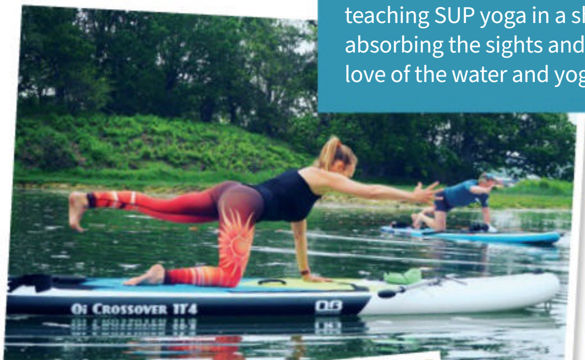
NAME: Lorna Chapman
AGE: 52
OCCUPATION: Yoga teacher, linguist
YOGA YEARS: 25+

Best yoga moment?

I've had countless beautiful yoga moments. I am especially happy teaching SUP yoga in a sheltered creek on the River Hamble, absorbing the sights and sounds of nature; a perfect blend of my love of the water and yoga.

Why did you start yoga?

My first encounter with yoga was in the '80s on a Sunday morning with my parents in front of the telly; we cavorted and laughed! I took my first 'real' class as an undergraduate in Cardiff, and later as a postgraduate in London, I bought a book to see how yoga might combat stress. By the late '90s, I was hooked on classes and home practice; yoga got me through a very destructive relationship. Unable to live without yoga, I completed my first teacher training in 2003.



How has yoga changed your life?

Yoga is an integral part of my life, and has helped me cope with a myriad of life challenges, from the dentist to the difficult birth of my son. It was a godsend when dealing with the trauma of my mother and father becoming ill and passing away, over seven and four years ago respectively. I've also made many wonderful lifelong friends through yoga, including Marcus, who joined my class in Southampton in 2004. Now we've been married 15 years and have a gorgeous 14-year-old son. Day to day, yoga has helped my sense of perspective and provided me with a more active lifestyle, as I moved away from my desk work. I had experienced RSI and headaches, and amid an evolving subtitling industry and growing family commitments, I wound down that part of my career to expand my yoga teaching.

Favourite yoga haunts

On or by the water. I love to practice at our family's beach hut, especially on quieter winter days. I'm also blessed to have led yoga holidays in several truly wonderful locations, including Turkey, Crete, Spain and Italy. This year, I'm excited to be returning to teach in Italy, on the stunning Calabrian coastline, and later to Kerala in India.

Anything else?

I had no idea what a huge part of my life yoga would become. I love seeing the benefits I can bring to all kinds of people, from disadvantaged teenagers, to office workers, to senior folk on chairs; from beginners to seasoned yogis. I enjoy introducing newcomers to yoga — often through free Park Yoga, and taking enthusiasts deeper into their practice through teaching the BWY Foundation Course. ॐ

Find out more about Lorna Chapman at: lunayogawinchester.co.uk

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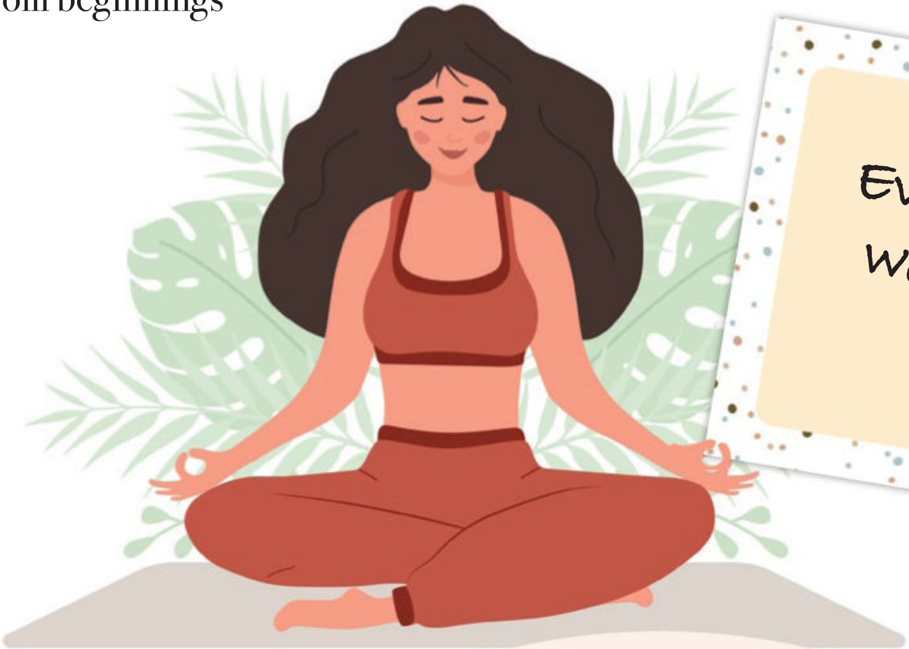

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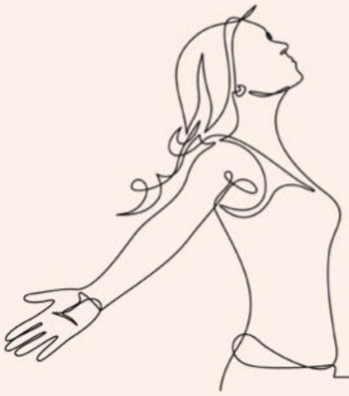

The Happiness Explorer

How to...make things just work out

By Lydia Kimmerling

"Everything is working out for me"

Repeat this six-word mantra daily and you'll see your life improve — it's worked for me. This is one of my favourite mantras and lately I've been in the habit of saying it daily, which is making a big difference to my mood and how my day goes.

Mantras are powerful tools that have been used in various spiritual and cultural traditions for thousands of years. These repetitive words or sounds have a profound effect on the mind and body, and help you to have greater focus, inner peace, and spiritual enlightenment.

One of the main reasons why mantras work is because they help to quiet the mind. The mind is constantly bombarded with thoughts, emotions, and distractions, which can make it difficult to focus and find inner peace. By repeating a mantra, however, the mind is given a simple and repetitive task to focus on, which helps to quiet the mental chatter and bring about a sense of calmness and clarity.

Another reason why mantras work is because they have a vibrational quality that can resonate with our inner being. The universe is made up of sound vibrations, and each individual has their own unique vibration. By chanting a mantra, we are aligning our own vibration with the vibration of the mantra, which can help to bring us into a state of harmony and balance.

I believe that mantras have a spiritual power that can help to connect us with a higher consciousness or divine energy. I know that on the surface it may seem too simple but don't underestimate the power of your words and feeling them. Cultivating this energy in you until you feel yourself shift — even if it's just the slightest — puts you into a better feeling state that makes you more present to what you want.

I have the six-word mantra written on my mirror in my bedroom, so that when I wake up I see it straight away and start saying it to myself. I find that this programs my thinking for the rest of the day and I end up hearing the words in my head all day long. It replaces any self-doubt, worry or negative chatter I may have and becomes the internal script I've consciously chosen, instead of automatically slipping into something that doesn't make me feel good.

Anyone can do this but what's most important is that you do it for as long as you need to, until you feel the words. Build the energy in you. Shout it if you need to. Move your body at the same time if it feels good. I needed this mantra to get me out of a patch of feeling like life wasn't working out for me. If you feel like life isn't working out for you, can you try it too? It's not magic, but it can feel like it when after a few days, you start to see how your life is changing because of where you are putting your attention and focus.

The month prior, I had a leak in the garden, the boiler broke down, I got a random fine and my tax payment went missing. Then, when I started to say this to myself daily, everything stopped going wrong and started working out for me. Little things like making a train I thought I would miss, to bigger things like gaining new clients. It's worth a try. ॐ

Do you think you will give this a go? Let Lydia Kimmerling aka The Happiness Explorer (thehappinessexplorer.com) know how you get on, she'd love to hear from you! Find her on Instagram @lydiakimmerling

Living the teachings – understanding yoga's everyday spiritual meanings

GRATITUDE

Gratitude: the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for, and to return kindness. The ability to regularly practice gratitude is one of the 10 habits that resilient people have, and this character strength is something that can be enhanced in all of us through awareness and practice. It is also something we can easily incorporate into our yoga practice and lives and can really help us to improve our general wellbeing.

Science tells us that there are many benefits to be gained from practicing gratitude. Not only can it make us more resilient when facing life's ups and downs, it can help us achieve better sleep, strengthen our relationships and even reduce anxiety and depression. Gratitude can also improve self-esteem, increase empathy and reduce aggression. Science tells us that when humans feel gratitude, the brain produces oxytocin, a hormone important to bonding, thus helping to strengthen our relationships. Neuroscience tells us that regular gratitude practice can literally rewire our brains to be happier.

It is said that gratitude turns what we already have into enough. This really is something to reflect upon in our lives today where expectations have changed and gratitude has largely diminished. In our modern fast-paced lives, possessions, in particular, are often something that we take for granted rather than consider a personal 'blessing'.

Next time you are in savasana or preparing to go to sleep, think of five things you are grateful for. Most of us will head straight to the major things in our lives: our loved ones, our health, our home and income. In our practice, however, we are also encouraged to remember the little things that may have made our day a little better: a smile from a stranger or a friendly cashier, a special cup of coffee, freshly-laundered sheets, a good book.

The real challenge comes on the not so good days or the really bad days. Can we still practice gratitude then? If we can, it results in significant benefits to our mental wellbeing and it is here that we can see the difference between those with resilience and those who are less resilient. A resilient person will continue to appreciate the good things even when lots of bad things are happening around them. In the same way, practicing gratitude before we go to bed can help us towards a better night's sleep and increases the likelihood of waking up feeling optimistic about the forthcoming day. This is because we have programmed our minds before sleep to focus on positive, not negative things.

There are several ways to practice gratitude, from keeping a journal to verbally expressing our gratitude to others. The easiest way it is to think of five different things that you are grateful for, not to write the same set of answers each time. Practice gratitude every day, when you first wake up, before you go to sleep, and when you are on your yoga mat. Being grateful could make you healthier and happier. ॐ

Sue Pugh is a yoga teacher and the founder of vitabonayoga.com and yogainspecialplaces.com

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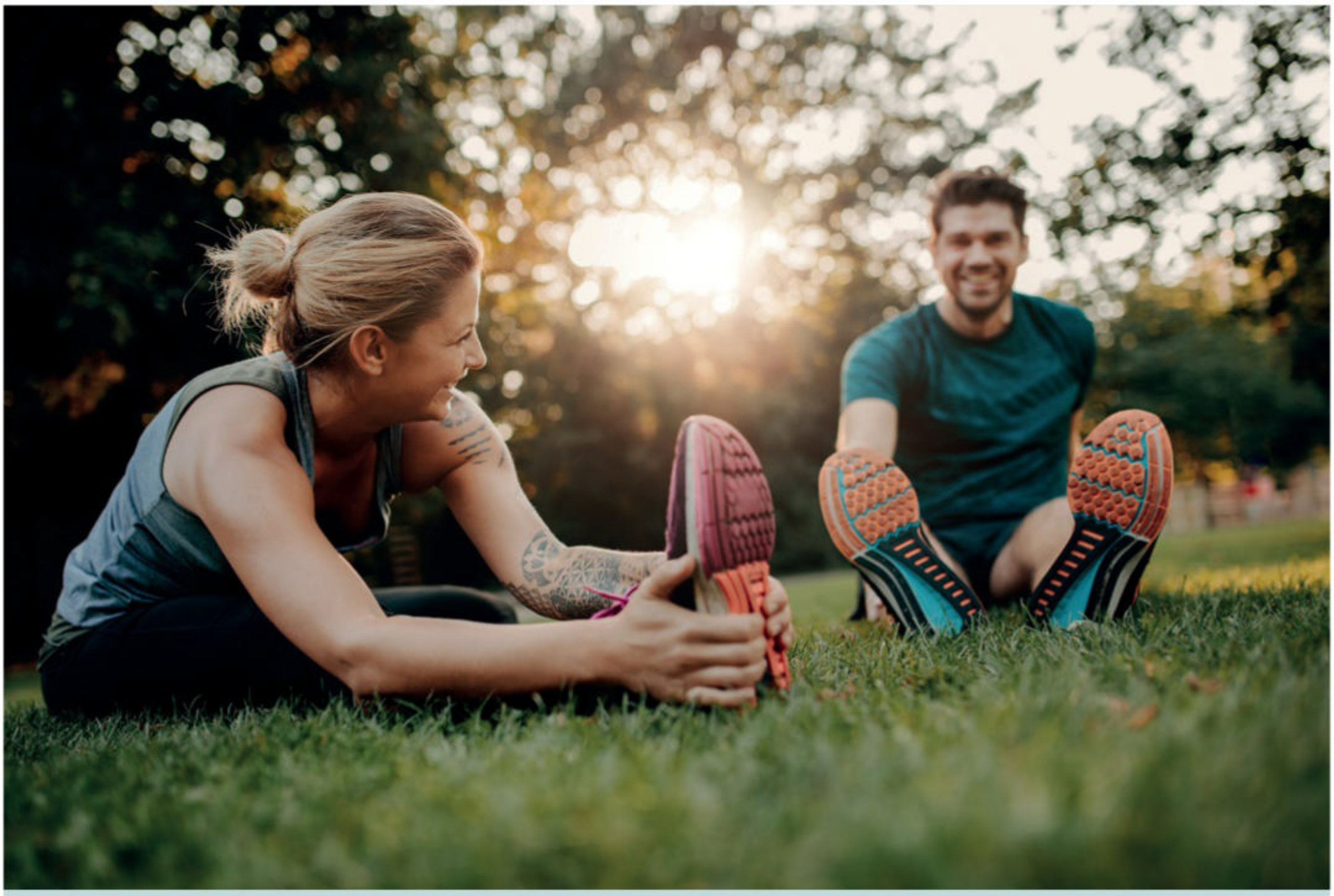

Find 5 minutes

Five minutes is all it takes to kick-start your wellness journey

Great news! The nation is becoming more aware of the benefits of exercise on mental health, according to a new study by Nuffield Health. It's an area where yoga, mindfulness and meditation can each play a vital role.

The results from Nuffield Health's latest Healthier Nation Index showed 32% of people are motivated to exercise as they know it improves their feelings of mental wellness, while 27% workout to lift mood and reduce anxious or depressed feelings.

But worryingly this year's survey of 8,000 UK adults also highlighted the impact of the cost of living crisis on our health and wellbeing. Some 47% of respondents to the survey stated that healthy food was now too expensive, up from previous findings last year.
Sleep is another problem area. Those surveyed were only getting an average of five hours and 54 minutes of sleep a night — over an hour short of the NHS recommendation of seven hours.

To combat this, Double Olympic Gold Champion Dame Kelly Holmes is promoting Nuffield Health's 'Find 5' campaign. Together, they are calling on the nation to spend five extra minutes a day focusing on their physical and mental wellbeing for body and mind. Whether it's spending five minutes less on your phone before bed, getting off the bus one stop early to get an extra five minutes of exercise, or swapping five items in your shopping basket for a healthier alternative, the aim is to help everyone make small changes that will collectively boost the nation's wellbeing.

"It's encouraging to see that exercise levels are on the up, however, the impact of major events such as the cost-of-living crisis on our health can't be ignored," said Holmes. "I know how much moving more helps my mental health, and if everyone can find just five extra minutes a day then we'll help put the nation on a healthier path."

To help motivate more movement, Nuffield Health has put together a series of free-to-access articles and short videos to inspire people with easy ways to start exercising and fit it into their everyday routines. It includes beginner sessions of yoga and Pilates as well as more energetic workouts like high-intensity cardio.

Marc Holl, head of primary care at Nuffield Health, said The Healthier Nation Index has tracked the state of the UK's health since 2020. "As we move from a period of great uncertainty due to the pandemic, the follow-up cost-of-living crisis is having a profound impact on everyone," he said. "That's why we're calling on the nation to find five minutes to look after your body and mind, as just five extra minutes of exercise a day can significantly boost mental and physical wellbeing, whether that's going for a brisk walk, taking up gardening or carrying heavy shopping bags home."

Why not try a quick five minutes of yoga at home right now? You'll feel so much better for it! ॐ

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asmy.org.au

The Australian School of Meditation and Yoga is a non-profit organisation with centres in Brisbane, Darwin, Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Each lifestyle centre is run by qualified teachers who are proud to offer an authentic, holistic approach to the ancient practice of yoga. The aim is to provide students with the tools they need to live a truly balanced life, mentally, physically and spiritually.

ASMY's newest Gold Coast studio recently celebrated its second birthday, opening its doors to share the yoga lifestyle and welcoming all to join in the free community celebrations with a range of yoga asana and meditation classes. "Our new community-built studio provides a beautiful and serene space

DFULNESS
STRESS RELIEF
YOGA SANCTUARY

for our yoga community to deepen their practice, and we invite everyone to come and experience it for themselves," said Amara Cauci, ASMY Mermaid Beach manager.

All ASMY programmes are simple and enjoyable and can benefit everybody regardless of age or current physical condition. With over 40 sessions a week covering all aspects of yoga from asanas, wellness workshops and meditations to live kirtan, art, dance and wisdom, there is something to help everyone take the next step on their yoga journey.

The goal is to guide all to a more balanced lifestyle with an increased sense of wellbeing and vitality as the body grows stronger and more flexible, and the mind more calm; to bring a greater sense of sacredness into daily life.

AEOS Refreshing Hydrating Mist

The ultimate beauty wake-up for lacklustre complexions. Premium-grade organic, biodynamic botanicals and crystal essences to uplift the skin. The blend of lemon balm, rose, lavender, sweet orange and witch hazel hydrosols revitalise and restore the skin's natural harmony, whilst the alchemical spagyric tinctures of opal, amethyst, charoite, turquoise, emerald, quartz and chrysoprase help rejuvenate and balance emotions. Let this heavenly facial mist envelop you with a layer of crystal essences and fragrant hydration as it refreshes and balances your skin and mind.

£55

aeos.net

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Refreshing Hydrating Mist
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om loves

Beautiful things for beautiful people

SHO Food Flask

Enjoy the perfect portable picnic with one of these sleek, hard-wearing storage flasks from SHO. Forget plastic pots and cling wrap, with an SHO food flask you can enjoy salads, soups, pasta, tasty dips or even ice cream on the go. Whether you want to keep food hot, or cold, the flask will ensure your chosen eats are served up in style. Available in 18 different colours, three patterned designs and two new Ombre tones, SHO's food flasks are the most stylish picnic accessory this summer.

£14.99 (530ml), £19.99 (800ml)

shoreusable.com

THE COUNTRY CRIB
SOMERSET

Lavender Pyramid Bag: Botanic Print

Beautiful lavender pyramid bag made with a selection of organic and natural fabrics. Filled generously with calming organic lavender, including flowers grown, dried and collected by The Country Crib. Store in your wardrobe to keep clothes fresh or place in your bedroom to aid relaxation. Also makes a great gift. Designed and handmade by The Country Crib in Somerset.

£7

thecountrycrib.co.uk

British Bloom Watering Can

This gorgeous durable galvanised steel indoor watering can in dramatic British Bloom design, featuring colourful dahlias and peonies, is perfectly balanced with its cleverly angled elegant slender spout for targeted watering to ensure the water only goes into the plant pot. One litre capacity. Just the thing to keep your plants happy and your kitchen looking lovely.

£19.95

annabeljames.co.uk

Belle Regali naturale Bath Salts

Indulge in a new ritual with these sensual, aromatherapy bath salts from wellbeing brand Belle Regali naturale. Made from a mineral-rich mix of 100% natural Epsom, Himalayan pink rock and Dead Sea salts, each blend has been expertly infused with pure essential oils to suit mood or ailment. From stressed-out minds to aching bodies, inflammation to irritation this efficacious selection of six different blends has all areas covered. Everything Belle Regali naturale makes is packaged in recyclable material and these bath salts are no exception: contained in a stylish, recycled and reusable glass jar they are kind to both skin and planet.

£16.50-£24.50

belle-regali-naturale.com

BELLE REGALI
naturale
bath salts
artisan
lemon
vetiver
cedarwood

Coral Bra Top & Leggings Set

New ‘Coral’ active leggings and matching bra top set from UK-based Universal Performance. Perfect for yoga and any gym session. Made ethically in Portugal from a strong, durable recycled fabric that holds and supports, with a high waist and body contouring. As with all UP activewear, it has an eco-friendly anti-odour solution within the fabric which allows you to wear this set more and wash it less! What’s there not to love?

Leggings: £40; Bra top: £42

up.clothing

Flow Meditation Candle

With a fresh, aromatic blend of spearmint, lavender, and vetiver essential oils, this candle will boost your focus and foster a sense of flow, while an included guided meditation (accessible via QR code under the lid) will help clear your mind and unlock your creative potential. Crafted by hand in small batches, Shō-moon candles are created with your wellbeing and the planet in mind. Each candle features sustainably sourced coconut and colza wax, unbleached cotton wicks, and the finest 100% pure essential oils.

£39

sho-moon.com

flow
shō-moon
THE REIKI MEDITATION CANDLE
Spearmint - Lavender - Vetiver
ō

Weleda After Shave Balm

Guys, you need this! A gentle balm to soothe skin after every shave from natural and ethical wellbeing brand, Weleda. Build and seal in moisture with gentle chamomile, cooling aloe vera gel and organic jojoba and coconut oils. Does just the job after your shave!

£19.50

weleda.co.uk

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Naturally fresh
All skin types

BALANCE BEGINS WITH VIONIC

Wellness footwear brand Vionic believes that balance is a force within each of us. When we are in balance with ourselves, and with the world around us, we are unstoppable. Vionic's Vio-Motion Technology delivers a difference you can feel. Each pair of Vionics combines a podiatrist-designed orthotic insole with a flexible, cushioned outsole and a lightweight, breathable upper. Direct from North California, there is a sense of wellness in every shoe.

Fortune, £130

Endure
With a breathable full-knit upper and sock-fit collar, enjoy an athleisure look that exudes wellness. Price £130 and available in grey and black.

Captivate
Also featuring Vionic's super-light outsole and cut outs, walk to yoga practice in this breathable, sock-fit-collar shoe. Price £140 (four colours).

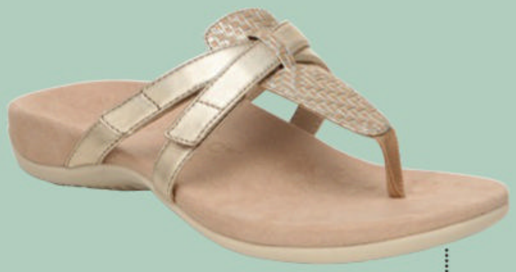
Fortune
Vionic's lightest outsole yet, breathable Fortune has cutouts for optimal flex. Price £130. Available in 3 colours.

Walker
Vionic's legendary trainer has a durable construction, legendary support and retro style, keeping it a front-of-pack favourite. Price £100 and choose from 10 different colours.

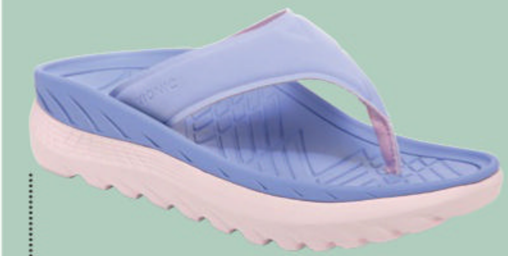
Pismo
Pismo is a washable, leather-free slip-on which features relaxed construction and eco-conscious materials; part of Vionic's sustainable Beach collection. Pismo is £60 and comes in 20 different colours.

Breeze
Breeze is another style from Vionic's Beach collection - a washable, leather-free slider pump made from eco-conscious materials. £65 and available in three colours.

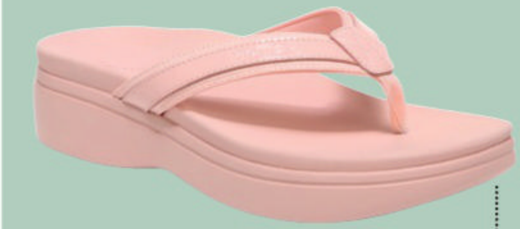
Agave
A generously cut strap lends a modern look and added comfort to the streamlined silhouette of Agave, making it perfect to slip on pre or post practice. Agave comes in 4 different colours, priced at £110.



Karley
This T-strap style on Karley offers two-point adjustability for a customised fit, delivering all-day comfort. £100 and available in black, cream, roze and gold.

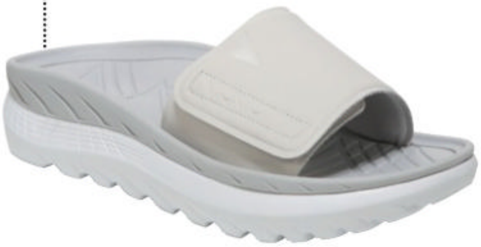


Restore
Look and feel great in Vionic's second all-gender recovery slider. Restore is priced £80 and available in a myriad of colours to choose from.



High Tide
The High Tide platform sandal is an elevated take on Vionic's best-selling Tide style; just-right height with contoured comfort make the perfect seasonal sandal. Price £90 and available in four different colours.

Rejuvenate
Show your feet some love in this all-gender recovery slider featuring adjustable straps, textured footbeds and dual-density cushioning. Available in 5 different colours, price £80.



www.vionicshoes.co.uk

Mayla
Mayla is an effortless slider with modern, puffer-straps on Vionic's classic moulded-footbed. As light and airy as it looks. £110 and available in black and cream.

om Competition

WIN

Wellicious Yoga Set & Day Yoga Retreat by Cocoon Luxury Retreats for 2 lucky readers — worth £375 each!

Balance your body and mind with an amazing prize bundle worth over £375 from Wellicious Yoga and Cocoon Luxury Retreats! Two prizes to be won!

This month, we have an extra special prize for two lucky readers who will each win a luxurious Wellicious Yoga Set, together with a Day Yoga Retreat voucher with Cocoon Luxury Retreats!

Escape the everyday in a new yoga outfit from Wellicious (wellicious.com), an eco-premium, cradle-to-cradle certified, biodegradable yoga fashion brand. Passionate about respecting and protecting the planet, Wellicious uses only materials that are safe for biological systems to create circular yoga products that are beautiful and still protect nature.

Together with Cocoon Luxury Wellness Retreats (cocoonluxuryretreats.co.uk), you can reconnect, reset and relax. Cocoon Retreats was founded to offer a meaningful wellness experience, with practical principles to take home. Set in beautiful locations around the UK, with a touch of luxury, you can quiet your mind and make room for new intentions.

Enter now and start your yoga adventure with two of Britain's brightest and healthiest yoga brands. ॐ

wellicious

COCOON
LUXURY WELLNESS RETREATS

To enter visit: ommagazine.com/wellicious-cocoon

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Two prizes to be won. Worth approximately £375 per winner; £750 in total. Closing date for entries: 14th June 2023

Planet yoga

Stories from around the weird and wonderful world of yoga

USA: Worker wellbeing

More younger employees are using workplace mental health and wellness benefits than older colleagues. Some 65% of Gen Z and 60% of Millennial workers say it's "very important" for employers to provide mental wellness benefits, a new study by health insurance firm, Securian Financial, shows. Just 49% of Gen X and 45% of Baby Boomer workers say the same. "Addressing mental wellness in the workplace has never been more crucial," said Securian Financial's Darin Reeser. "With burnout and the Great Resignation still in our midst, better understanding employee needs, expectations and concerns around mental wellness is pivotal."

USA: Tall stories

NBA basketball icon Robert Parish — who measures over 7ft tall — says yoga was a key part of his success during the 80s and 90s. But it was a tough start. "My first yoga class I went to, I was so embarrassed," he told the Players Own Voice podcast. "There were older women that could touch their toes and I could not. I'm like, 'I'm a pro athlete. How could I not touch my toes?" Yoga has become a fitness staple among NBA stars and athletes and many other sports, but Parish, now 69, was an early adopter, playing for the famous Boston Celtics between 1980 and 1994.

UK: Countdown Carol

Celebrity maths genius Carol Vorderman showed off her yoga skills ahead of filming for a new TV show in South Africa. The former Countdown presenter shared a video of herself doing yoga on Instagram ahead of taking part in the new series of I'm A Celebrity All Stars, which aired on television screens at the end of April. The 62-year-old star performed a number of yoga moves outdoors on a balcony in front of a hot tub, including down dog, peddling out her feet on the mat. “I loved doing my yoga and weights out in the fresh South African air with all the animals around me,” she told followers.

TSB
DAILY Mirror

UK: Legal eagles

London’s top law firms are attracting new talent through their doors by offering yoga, free hiring of Brompton bicycles and even beekeeping tuition, the FT reported. It’s also an attempt to lure employees back after many enjoyed the benefits of home or hybrid working during lockdowns. Many plush offices in the city include their own yoga studios, or membership schemes to other studios, as part of an overall wellness benefits package. Estate agents say many firms are also moving offices as a result of the shift in working practices, including downsizing to smaller spaces.

India: Yoga Day

Get ready for Yoga Day! June 21 marks International Day of Yoga, an annual celebration of the ancient Indian discipline that was endorsed by the UN back in 2014. Recognising its universal appeal, the UN proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by resolution 69/131, with the aim of raising awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga. The day itself is marked by countless classes and other events worldwide, so be sure to look out for something wherever you are in the world, from India to Iceland.

OM meets...

SALLY TALAL

You can find Sally Talal at this year's OM Yoga Show — and even practice with her live in London — all are welcome, she says, wherever you are on your unique, incredible yoga journey

How did you first get started in yoga?

Growing up in Greece, I loved playing football and other sports, but I later found out that I had a heart condition that limited high-intensity activities. In search of a new form of movement, I walked into a yoga studio in Athens and never looked back. At first, Hatha, Vinyasa and Aerial Yoga were my main practice; 15 years on, my practice continues to change and evolve.

What differences have you seen in your practice over the years?

At first, yoga was a way for me to build and maintain strength, flexibility, and balance. Over the years, my practice has evolved beyond the physical aspects. As I introduced meditation and breathwork, I discovered the profound effects these practices have on the mind, body and spirit.

They have helped peel away the layers and uncover hidden corners of my subconscious, supporting me to know, accept, and unconditionally love my true self. Today, my yoga practice is not just about physical fitness but about holistic wellness. I believe that yoga is a powerful tool for cultivating inner peace, balance, resilience, and I strive to share this with others through my teaching.

What are the main styles of yoga you practice and teach?

I teach and practice a variety of yoga styles including Anusara Yoga, Vinyasa, Hatha, Restorative, Yin, along with meditation and pranayama.

How do you feel when you practice compared to when you haven't been able to get on your mat for a while?

I can definitely feel a difference in my overall wellbeing. I often feel less grounded and balanced; I'm not in harmony with myself. So when I get back to my practice, I feel renewed, connected and centred.

Do you think anyone, at any age or ability, can enjoy the benefits of yoga?

Absolutely! I am a strong believer that yoga can benefit anyone, regardless of age or ability. I've seen first-hand how yoga can transform people's lives, whether they are recovering from a past trauma, injury or looking to improve their overall wellness. However, it's important to remember that every individual has a unique body, skeletal structure and ability, and so not every pose or setting may be suitable for everyone.

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The beauty of yoga lies in its adaptability — it's a personal journey of self-exploration and discovery where one can find the practice that resonates with them and feels comfortable in their own body. Whether it's in a private 1:1 session, a group class, or a yoga retreat, there's a way for everyone to experience the benefits of yoga.

What does yoga mean to you personally?

To me, yoga is much more than a physical practice. It's a way of life, a journey of self-discovery, and a path towards inner peace and harmony. It's a ritual to connect with my innermost being, a way to soften the chattering of the mind and open my heart; it actually all comes down to love. Yoga, meditation and breathwork invoke an immense upsurge of love within, bringing me back to my essence, back to the home within.

Do you have moments that you feel you are truly 'in the flow' and 'truly alive'? How can we achieve this state?

In short, yes I do and then this experience 'leaves' and you may wonder: how did I achieve this state? How can I amplify these flow states more often or for longer periods of time? I personally don't think it's something that can be achieved by a set of actions or a checkbox to tick off. It's more about allowing and surrendering to the present moment.

I experience this often during my yoga practice, when I feel so connected to my body and breath that I lose myself in the movement. Or when I teach and I'm completely connected and present with my students. It also happens when I'm painting or hiking and reach a mountaintop and am just in awe at the beauty of nature — where all else ceases to exist and I am just there in this space and time, in harmony. The best way I can explain it is that time

seems to slow down and my awareness expands. The amount of time of receiving an external stimuli and responding to it broadens and becomes longer.

How do you find the balance of teaching and your personal practice?

Ah, the balance of teaching and personal practice! It's a constant dance and one that I often struggle with. As a yoga teacher, there are many tasks that come with the job and it's easy to let my personal practice take a backseat. I've come to realise that my personal practice needs to be prioritised as a non-negotiable and schedule it into my calendar. It's what keeps me grounded, inspired and connected to my own practice and my students. When I do, everything else seems to flow and fall into place more easily.

How do you raise your own vibration?

It's all about identifying what's bringing me down and finding the right tools to counteract it. Sometimes it's just a matter of giving myself time and space to let things settle on their own. As the saying goes: "Let what comes come, let what goes go... find out what remains."

But when I need a little extra boost, I turn to different techniques like Breath of Joy (it even has it in the name!), emotional freedom technique (EFT), shaking, dancing, or painting. If I am feeling unbalanced, I'll practice pranayama or meditation, or simply go for a walk in nature and feel the earth barefoot. The key is to experiment and explore what works best for each of us in different situations.

What do you love to do when you are not practicing yoga?

When I'm not practicing or teaching yoga, you will find me either painting and creating, hiking in nature, spending time with friends and family, rock climbing or finding beautiful unique thrift finds!

What are your yoga plans for the future?

It is unknown, but I envision myself continuing to share my passion of yoga, meditation and breathwork to help others on their journey of self-discovery, healing and empowerment.

As someone who migrated from Iraq and grew up in Athens, seeing the big refugee crisis in 2015 I feel called to support refugees, asylum seekers and marginalised communities through trauma-informed yoga and help in making it more accessible to all. I currently offer free weekly classes with Fierce Calm to the wonderful charity Say It Loud Club. I'm also excited to be hosting all-inclusive retreats in the UK and Greece next year, including one on the beautiful island of Lefkada (from May 24 - 29, 2024). I hope to fuse my passions of art and yoga in workshops, retreats and creating mindful products — exciting things are on the horizon! Regardless of where life takes me, I'll continue to ground myself with questions like: Why am I choosing to take this action? Does this align with my purpose? Will this bring me closer to my north star (vision) or further away?"

In October, you'll be teaching at the OM Yoga Show. What can people expect from your classes there?

So grateful to be teaching at the OM Yoga Show in October — and bringing Anusara Yoga back to the show! You can find me on Friday 13th October for a free taster session. Anusara Yoga means 'flowing with grace', 'going with the flow', 'following your heart' and is a modern-day Hatha yoga system. My teaching is inspired by its heart, precision and grace.

QUICK Q&A

Favourite yoga or spiritual book?
A book that I find myself returning to each year is Khalil Gibran's 'The Prophet'. This book is filled with profound wisdom and deep insights.

Go-to health food or drink?
You've got to love frozen bananas, cacao, maca and strawberry smoothies. If it's too bitter, try adding a small dash of maple syrup.

Holistic remedy you swear by?
If you feel a cold incoming, try an anti-inflammatory drink of water, turmeric, black pepper, ginger and garlic. Not going to lie, it may not be the tastiest drink, but it works wonders for boosting your immune system!

Favourite quote?
A quote I've been coming back to lately by Steve Chandler: "If it weren't for the stories I make up about my reality, I'd be free."

If you want to dive deeper into this wonderful practice, I invite you to join me and Sarah Powell on Saturday 14th October at 12:30pm for our 'Uplift your Soul with Anusara Yoga' workshop, the story of Hanuman, the monkey god. Our 90-minute workshop includes chanting, pranayama, asana with Anusara principles of alignment to guide you with courage and heart to lift into handstands and skillfully leap into Hanumanasana (splits). I can't wait to see you there!

Any messages to readers who have not been to the OM Yoga Show before?

It's an exciting vibe you don't want to miss, bringing together a diverse group of people from different backgrounds. The show offers a unique opportunity to practice with a variety of teachers and yoga styles that you may not have had access to before. It's a valuable and enriching experience for anyone interested in yoga, mindfulness and wellness — come join us and see for yourself!

*Find out more about Sally Talal online at: sallytalal.com or connect via Instagram and Facebook @sallytalal_*

omyoga
AWARDS
2023

OM YOGA AWARDS 2023

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

The OM Yoga Awards are YOUR awards, and so you, our loyal readers, will be nominating your favourite brands, teachers and retreats for them to be in with a chance of being awarded an OM Yoga Award. Once nominations have closed, a short-list will be created and released and then the winner of each category will be announced at the OM Yoga Show 2023.

The categories are...

Favourite Yoga Teacher
Favourite Yoga Studio
Favourite Yoga Teacher Trainer
Favourite Online Yoga Platform or App
Favourite Yoga Mat
Favourite Yoga Clothing Brand
Favourite Yoga Charity
Favourite Yoga Retreat Company
OM Yoga Good Karma Award 2023

Head to ommagazine.com/om-yoga-awards to complete the nomination form.

Nominations close on the 1st June. Final voting opens on 1st July

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PEACE, LOVE AND SACRED CACAO

PALM COURT ENTRANCE
om yoga show
MIND BODY SOUL

DJ LuluOm

You may have seen Luisa Bradshaw-White in popular television shows such as EastEnders or Holby City. But she's also a big yoga lover and will be sharing her ecstatic dance and euphoric vibes at the OM Yoga Show this year. Come and join the party!

Luisa Bradshaw-White aka DJ LuluOm creates a wave of music that is earthy, shamanic, heart-opening, tribal, euphoric and fun. Her dance events start slow and hypnotic and build and build to a fast-moving, free-flowing, ecstatic peak, then finish with a deeply-grounding sound immersion.

At the OM Yoga Show this year, you can join in! After a blissful, grounding cacao ceremony, expect dancing, moving to medicine music, healing shamanic sounds, shifting to high-vibrational euphoric tunes, before closing with a calming and soothing immersion of sweet sound.

"This is not a sober rave," she tells OM. "It is a somatic journey using movement and sound to let go of anything that no longer serves us, so we can step into the fullest, most joyous version of ourselves. This is a space of non-judgement. A space to be completely you. We welcome you!"
OM caught up with her recently to find out more about yoga story.

Can you tell us a bit more about your yoga background?
I have been an actor for 30 years but trained as a breathwork practitioner 20 years ago. I actually had a spiritual awakening in my early 20s, so I have been on this path a long time — healing

myself, mostly whilst acting! But then I felt the universe plucked me out of that career and let me know that there was real work to be done! I have had a love of ecstatic dance and somatic dance journeys for a long time but felt the call to train to offer this out into the world.

What sort of classes are you teaching now?

It's called ecstatic dance, but I think of it more as a somatic movement journey. Everyone who dances with me regularly has unravelled the word 'dance' — we move so freely now without thought for what we are doing.

How do you want people to feel on your dance journeys?

I am passionate about creating a wave of music that takes you out of your mind and deep into your body. Sometimes there are tears as we allow ourselves to shift what no longer serves us energetically. We come out of our thinking, analysing mind and just allow the body, the movement, the music and the breath to do its thing.

When we do this, and we get over feeling inhibited, then we can stay in our bodies for sometimes the whole journey. Without thought. And this leads to that feeling of euphoria.

It's such a beautiful, personal inner journey, as well as wonderful feeling the energy of everyone dancing around you. It is really important to me that I hold a safe, non-judgemental space for people to go on this journey of self-discovery.

What can people expect from your classes at the show this year?

I am so excited to be facilitating a sacred cacao ceremony and somatic dance journey at the OM Yoga Show this year! Come join us as we dance a somatic journey that is wild, barefoot and free! We start the ceremony by drinking heart-opening sacred cacao, where we make an intention for the dance. We are then guided by an experienced facilitator to get out of our head space and into our bodies, helping us to let go of inhibitions, earthing our energy and bringing us back to our centre, connecting back with our true selves and allowing us to feel free to dance in whatever way our body wants to.

om yoga show

Find Your Freedom

Freedom Ecstatic Dance + Conscious DJ Set with Luisa Bradshaw-White aka DJ LuluOm

Come and enjoy the magic of a sacred cacao ceremony and somatic dance journey. Experience a wave of music that is earthy, shamanic, heart-opening, tribal, slow, fast... the first part is facilitated helping you to get out of the head and into the body. Allowing our bodies to move in whatever way they want. This is not 'dance' — this is a free expression of the self! (Please ensure you bring your own yoga mat with you)
Ticket £24.50, includes cacao drink - omyogashow.com

5.15pm - 7.15pm
Saturday 14th October, 2023

Any useful yoga tips for everyday life?

Something I do now, every time any sort of emotion comes up, rather than analysing it ("he said this, she said that etc...") I just take a few conscious breaths and start to move my body. I find the part of my body that is storing these emotions and move it! I meet the pain, anger or sadness without judgement and allow it to be felt and heard and moved through my body without dramatising it, without adding to it. This practice can be so healing. ॐ

Find DJ LuluOm on Instagram @freedom_luluom

A **360º** overview of...

Wheel Pose (Urdhva Dhanurasana)

With Dr Kiki Morriss

Wheel Pose (Urdhva Dhanurasana)

Wheel Pose is an advanced back bend and inversion. It stretches your chest and abdomen, whilst strengthening your arms, legs and back muscles.

Work on straightening your arms as you first lift into the position, then work on straightening your legs. Stretch both sides of your body evenly and lift the front of your body to increase the arch of your back. Lift your diaphragm, belly button and pubic bone, whilst keeping your breath steady and relaxed.

WHEEL POSE (URDHVA DHANURASANA)

URDHVA = UPWARD   DHANURA = BOW   ASANA = POSTURE

MOVING INTO THE POSE

- Lie on your back with your knees bent, and your feet flat on the ground hip width apart.
- Place your hands on either side of your head with your fingers pointing towards your feet.
- Press firmly into your hands and feet.
- Lift your chest, back and hips.
- Lift your head back and place the crown of your head on the ground.
- Lift your shoulders and sacrum.
- Begin to straighten your arms and legs.
- Lift your head from the ground.
- Lift your ribcage as you arch your spine.
- Fully extend your arms and legs.
- Take your head back and keep your throat relaxed.

FOCUS YOUR GAZE

- Your focal point (drishti) is your nose or a fixed point straight in front of you. Alternatively try closing your eyes.

BACK

- Press into your hands and push your chest forwards in order to bend evenly along your spine, and not just from your lower back.
- Use your back muscles (erector spinae and latissimus dorsi) to move your spine into an extended, arched position.
- Keep your lower back stable by activating your psoas and quadratus lumborum muscles.
- Avoid compressing your lower back as you fully extend your arms and legs.

HIPS, LEGS AND FEET

- Activate your hamstrings and gluteus maximus to extend your hips.
- Use your adductor muscles to stabilise your upper legs and squeeze them towards each other.
- Activate your quadriceps muscles to extend your knees.
- Keep your feet firmly grounded.
- Keep the back of your pelvis broad by lifting your outer thighs and hips.

SHOULDERS AND ARMS

- Use your triceps to straighten your arms.
- Use your infraspinatus and teres minor muscles to turn your shoulders outwards.
- Activate your trapezius and rhomboids to bring your shoulder blades towards the midline.
- Use your trapezius to soften your shoulders away from your ears.
- Keep your elbows aligned with your shoulders.
- Keep your hands firmly grounded.

BENEFITS

- Strengthens your arms, legs and back muscles.
- Increases the flexibility and stability of your shoulders, spine and hips.
- Develops stamina and focus.
- Energises your brain through being inverted.
- Opens your heart chakra.

REFLECTIONS

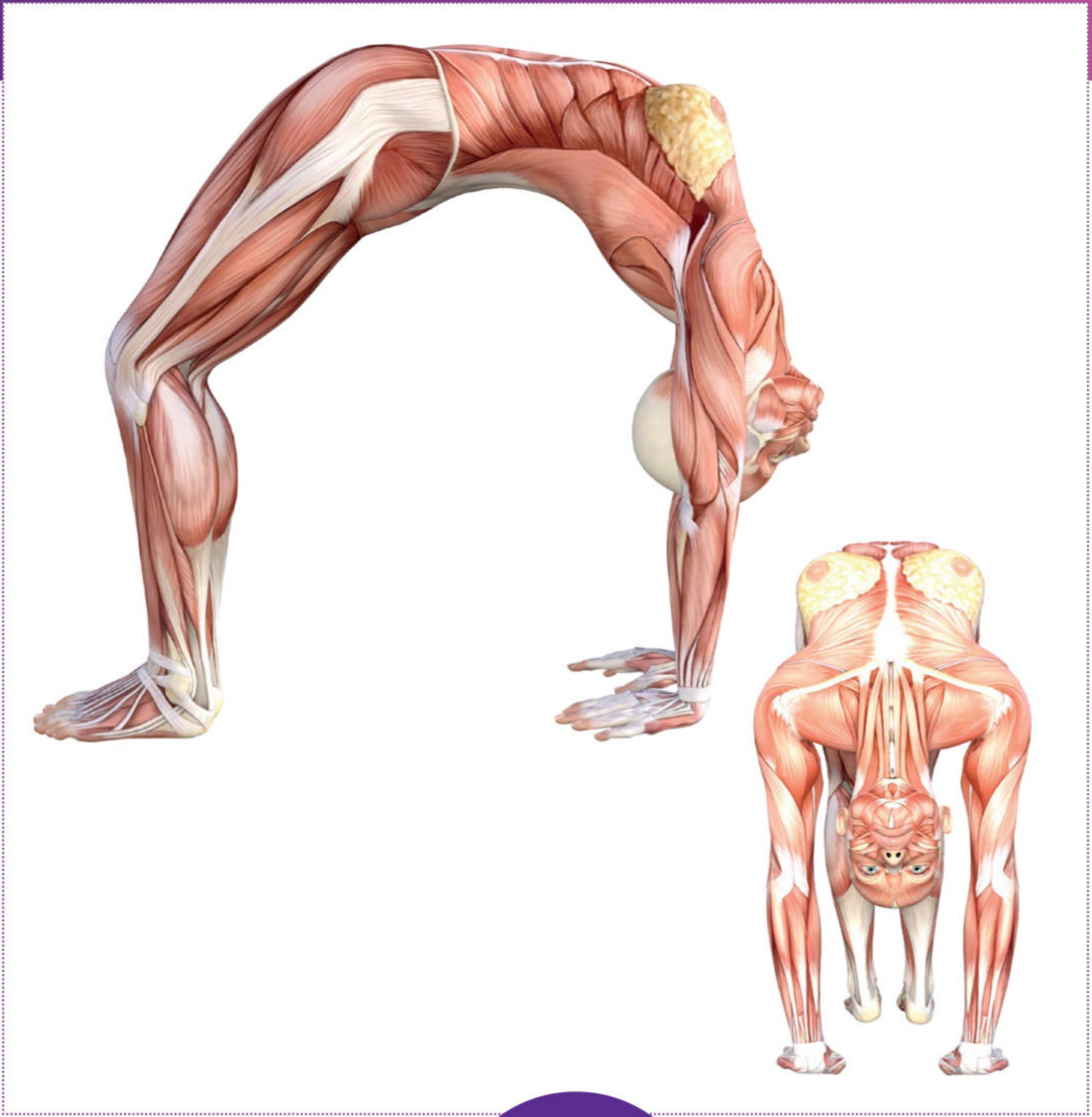
- Our spines degenerate with age and our bodies shorten and lose vitality. We can counteract this natural process by bending backwards. This allows the spine to remain long and flexible.

VARIATIONS & MODIFICATIONS

- Bridge Pose is a safer option if you have a back or shoulder injury.
- You can practice Wheel Pose with your head on the ground, but be very careful not to compress your neck.
- If you have a shoulder injury try facing away from a wall with about 0.5 metres between your heels and the wall. Lift your arms and take your hands back until you can place them on the wall behind you. Gently arch your back as you reach your hands back.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Avoid the pose if you have a back or shoulder injury.
- Practice with caution if you have high blood pressure.



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Today's Picks
Sun Salutations

Doctor Kiki Morriss is a medical doctor, yoga teacher and author of 'Nurturing Your Family With Yoga'. Visit: primrosehillyoga.com or Instagram @kiki.yoga

YOGA at HOME

Inner warrior

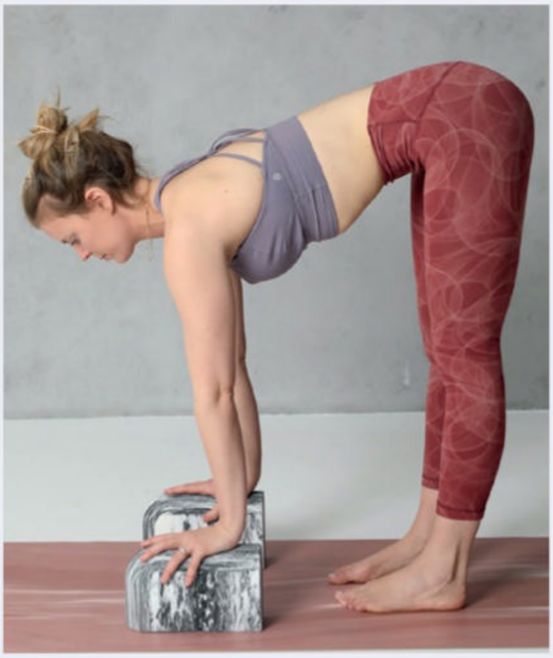
A whistle-stop tour through the warrior poses.

By Isabel Lankester

Watch the mini session with Isabel Lankester on the OM website or app, brought to you in partnership with Isabel Lankester Yoga. Visit isabellankesteryoga.com for the full-length class, plus 100+ more on-demand and live stream classes.

Embrace your inner warrior

The essence of a warrior is strength, but also patience, perseverance and focus. Here, we acknowledge our foundations of strength and endurance as we feel into these strong and powerful warrior postures.

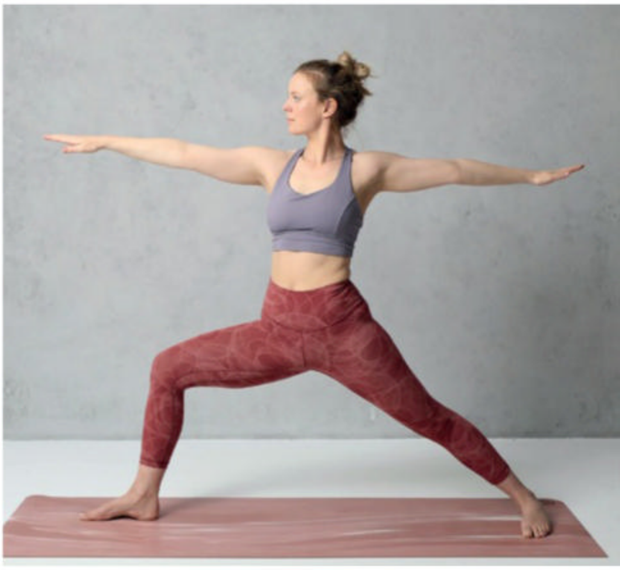


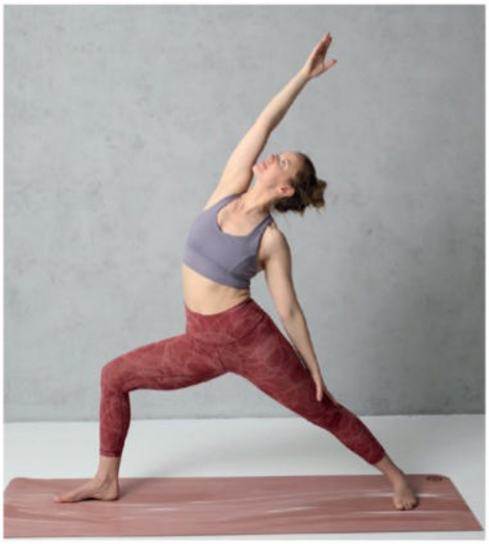
1. Ardha Uttanasana (Standing Half Forward Fold)

Begin in standing at the top of your mat, hands at your heart, eyes closed. Take a deep breath, inhale and reach your arms upwards to Urdhva Hastasana (upwards salute, image not shown), exhale as you forward fold to Uttanasana (standing forward bend, image not shown). Start to inhale towards a half way lift of the spine into Ardha Uttanasana (standing half forward fold). Option to use blocks (as illustrated here).

2. Virabhadrasana B (Warrior 2)

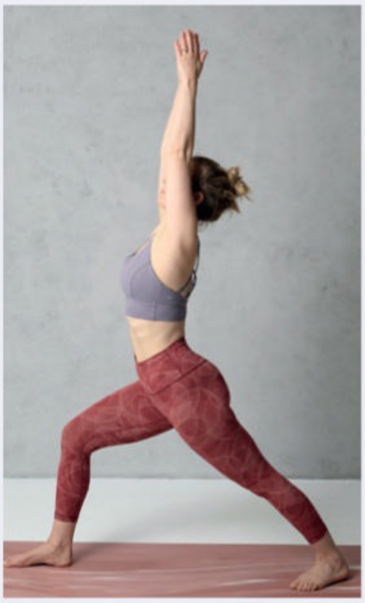
Exhale step back into a plank pose, lowering down onto your knees, chest and chin. Slide onto your tummy and press into your hands. Inhale baby cobra (Bhujangasana, not shown). Exhale start to draw back into downward-facing dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana, not shown) where you can walk out your legs by alternatively bending your knees. When you are ready, find stillness in your down dog and lift your right leg up and back. Step forward to a warrior two pose (Virabhadrasana B). In this pose, your front knee bends to create a stretch in your hips, your arms engage and extend straight out from your shoulders, and your gaze, or dristhi, remains calm and steady toward your front hand. It is the second of three poses dedicated to Virabhadra, the Hindu god who incarnated as a human, who enhances the strength and stamina of both beginner and advanced yogis alike.





3. Viparita Virabhadrasana (Reverse Warrior)

Hold for a few breaths before reaching up and back with your right arm into reverse warrior (Viparita Virabhadrasana). Exhale release both hands inside of the front foot, option to lower the back knee into lizard pose (not shown). Hold here for a few breaths. This pose will help to open the hip flexors and soften the body in between the stronger warrior asanas.



4. Virabhadrasana A (Warrior 1)

When ready step back to down dog. Lift your left leg up and back and repeat the sequence from warrior 2, reverse warrior and lizard on this left side. After finishing via down dog, make your way to the top of the mat, remain in a forward fold, inhale to Ardha Uttanasana (see image 1), a half-way lift before releasing the spine completely in Uttanasana, a deep forward fold. Inhale, press into your feet and raise your arms over head, looking towards your thumbs in Urdhva Hastasana (upwards salute, not shown). Exhale bring the hands back to your heart, begin to settle your breathing.

Inhale and reach your arms upwards again to Urdhva Hastasana, exhale as you forward fold to Uttanasana. From here lean your weight into your right foot and step back with you left foot. Encourage heel to arch as you enter warrior 1 pose (Virabhadrasana A). Option to look up to your thumbs or if you're feeling a little unsteady look directly ahead.

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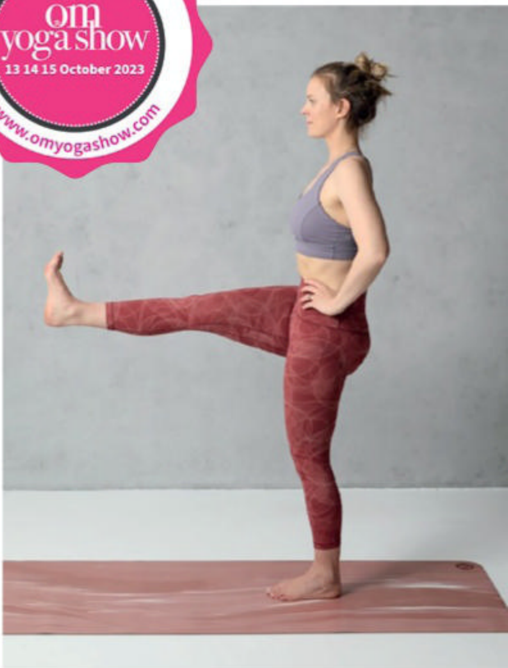
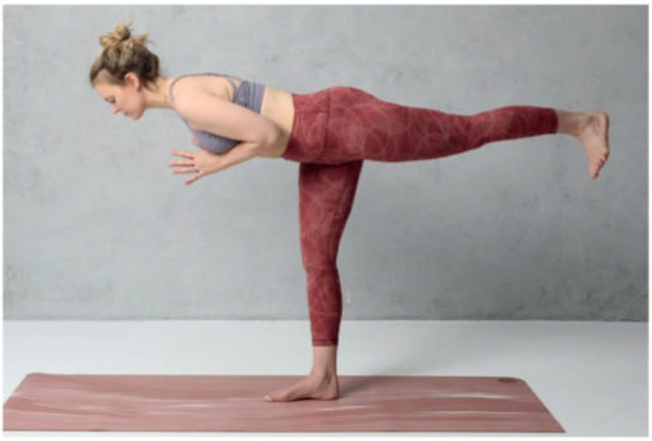


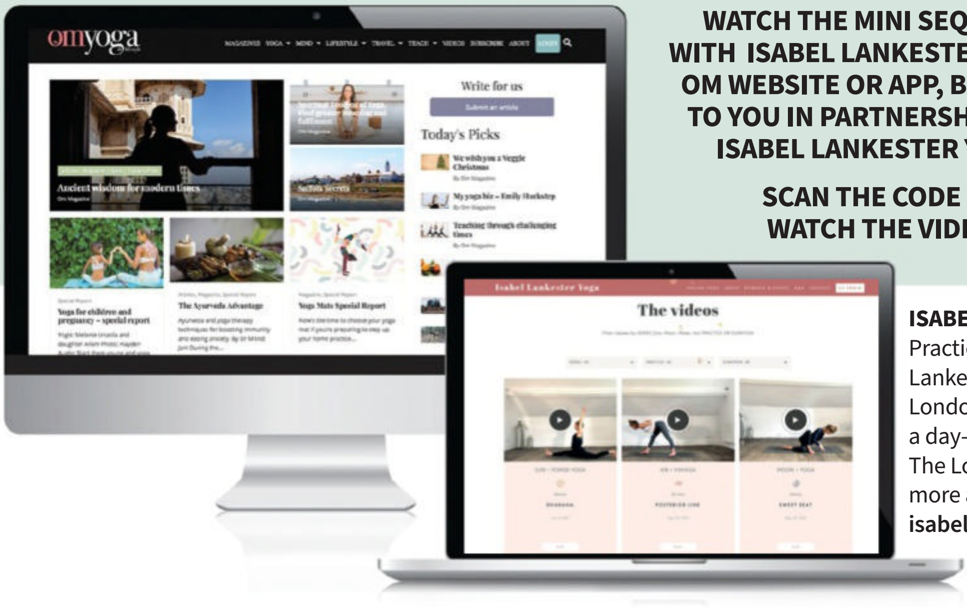


5. Virabhadrasana C (Warrior 3)

Draw your left hip forward and press down into your right foot and left inner arch. Slowly draw hands to the heart, lean into your right foot and come forward into a warrior 3 pose (Virabhadrasana C). Option to either keep your hands at the heart or reach your hands forward for a bit of a challenge! Keep a little bend on the right knee to prevent locking it and engage through the left glute muscle. Hold for three full breaths before stepping back into warrior 2 (Virabhadrasana B). Can you feel the right hip externally rotate while you feel a light internal rotation of the left hip? Hold for three breaths before stepping forward and repeating on the left side.

6. Utthita Eka Padasana (Standing Balance One Leg Pose)

A little tip! If you're finding you are off-balance in warrior three, try this pose again after practicing Utthita Eka Padasana (standing balance one leg pose). Stand in Tadasana (mountain pose, not shown) in front of your mat, keeping your feet together, arms down. Keep the shoulders relaxed, and keep your breathing relaxed and normal. Now, while deepening your breath, take both the hands onto your waist and try to lift the left leg. Hold a few breaths and move into warrior 3 (Virabhadrasana C – Image 5) from here. Try this on both sides.



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Practice in-person with Isabelle Lankester at the OM Yoga Show in London this October. She's also hosting a day-long retreat on 23 September at The Lodge Space in London. Find out more and practice with her online at: **isabellankesteryoga.com**

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Elemental Yoga at home
I.L.Y

Yoga YOUR way

A three-part series on expanding your practice to make it support your body, your life, your needs.

By Esther Marie

PART THREE- SPIRIT

Yoga can be a great tool at discovering more about yourself and connecting deeper to yourself. For this final piece in my Yoga Your Way trilogy, I am sharing with you how I have used yoga as a practice to reconnect to myself at a soul level, to inspire you to explore this way also.

Whilst many people find meaning through the spiritual side of yoga, this isn't the case for everyone. Regardless of whether you believe in the chakras, and a divine Source or not, I think everyone who practices yoga can mutually agree that it helps them reconnect to themselves, even if just for the class they attend. It is from this point of view that I encourage you to rethink how this spiritual (non-physical) side of yoga has impacted you. Below are three examples of how yoga has improved my self-understanding, awareness and ability to self-regulate, and also helps me daily to find some inner peace…just from even spending sometimes as little as 10 minutes on my mat!

1. Yoga helps to cultivate awareness

When committing to a regular yoga practice you will automatically become more aware of the energy within you and around you. This energy can be thought of as a higher consciousness; a divine force, or as I like to think of it, a wise mind and inner mentor. My inner mentor is the part of me who leads from the love in my bones and not worries about the thinking in my mind. Start cultivating awareness of this energy shift in you whenever you are moving on your mat or sitting in meditation. Pause for a second to notice and remind yourself that this is your highest, true self, because this, in my opinion, is a gentle spiritual practice.

2. Yoga challenges our need to be busy and to be in control

Yoga asks us to surrender to the present, to our body's needs and to accept the moment we are in. Through asking this of us, yoga helps us to relinquish the control many of us live our daily busy lives by. Staying on top of things, keeping productive, working through the to-do list and filling our minds with the never-ending 'shoulds' and 'musts', is a sad truth of this fast and furious modern world.

Yoga, however, offers us a safe haven. There is no room for this micromanagement or overthinking in yoga because to practice yoga one must be present and be attuned to both breath and body. For myself, a recovering perfectionist and A-type personality, in my 20's it was this aspect of the practice that used to put me off ever starting yoga. But now, six years into my journey and living a yoga-inspired life, I

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understand why exactly brains like mine come to practice and fall in love with all dimensions of yoga.

Our souls want peace and our spirits need rest. We know deep within ourselves (in our higher and wise mind) that constantly living in 'doing mode' and spending life chasing the next achievement isn't good for us and doesn't make us happy. What we want is to do less, and find more peace and rest. We dream of time out to fully breathe in and out and to top ourselves up. This is exactly what my yoga and meditation practice offer me — a spiritual escape in a productivity-obsessed world!

The beauty of asana is that it offers us the chance to find that space in our life, through movement. Mindfully moving, slowing down our breathing and staying attuned and aware of our body as we move is a way to nourish our soul. It's what I like to call soul food. The way I practice and teach is very mindful, less about the specific alignment of a posture, and more focused on the internal sensations and experience for the individual. This way my movement regulates my nervous system, reduces my stress, soothes my mind through the steady breath and the unity of body and mind simultaneously, draws me into the present moment and quite literally feeds my soul.

3. Yoga helps us find wholeness

The word 'yoga' means to join or unite, and yogis view this unison in different ways – the unison of body, mind and spirit, uniting all the aspects of yourself, or uniting with a higher power or spiritual force. With this as the intention as we move with our breath, we are cultivating wholeness, remembering wholeness, and realising all is well including ourselves. I recognised this spiritual experience very early on in my yoga journey, flowing at home after a hard day at work. I felt depleted, burnt out and overwhelmed, but as I began moving and breathing I had this realisation that I was okay, I was enough, I was whole, and this stress will pass.

I love to share my passion for yoga practice and hope my body, mind, spirit trilogy has been insightful and supportive to read. I truly believe that yoga is a person-centred practice that is accessible for everybody. As someone with two long-term physical health conditions, the adaptability, creativity and individualism yoga allows has made me the strongest, healthiest and happiest I've ever been. It can do the same for you too.

Practice with Esther Marie live and in-person on Sunday 15th October 2023 at the OM Yoga Show in London. Visit: omyogashow.com

For more information about Esther Marie visit: esthermarieyoga.com or connect with her on Instagram @esthermarieyoga You can also practice via her online studio and yoga app EMY Studio

My home yoga studio
Juliet Lundholm

My home *yoga studio*

Juliet Lundholm explains why she set up her own yoga studio space and how it has transformed her life and the lives of her students

I had just returned home from teaching at a local community centre saddled with three bags of mats, blankets and props. The room had been cold, full of bright strobe lighting and noisy from all the activities in the adjacent rooms. I longed to create a yoga space that was quiet, calm, inviting and intimate where students could come for a moment of peace, focus and to be held in a way daily adult life doesn't allow.

I had just left the corporate world after suffering burnout and workplace bullying, which had led to a feeling of physical disassociation and mental overwhelm. Yoga had been my saviour; it had brought me back to myself and given me the space I needed to work out who I was off the mat through my practice on the mat. I now wanted to facilitate that possibility for others.

That night, as I told my husband of my dream to create the perfect space and why, which I had always viewed as just a pipe dream, he suggested we went outside to check if maybe, just maybe, it was possible for a studio to be placed in our existing garden. We live in a small Victorian terrace house in London and I wasn't sure how I could make it work. I remember the night well as it was raining, cold, and we were wielding flashlights, a tape measure and several mats. We measured up and a small studio would fit if we sacrificed half of the outside space.

In a moment of what I can only describe as madness I decided to go for it and two months later there it stood, at the bottom of my garden, a beautiful little shala, a yoga studio that was mine. This moment was significant for me because

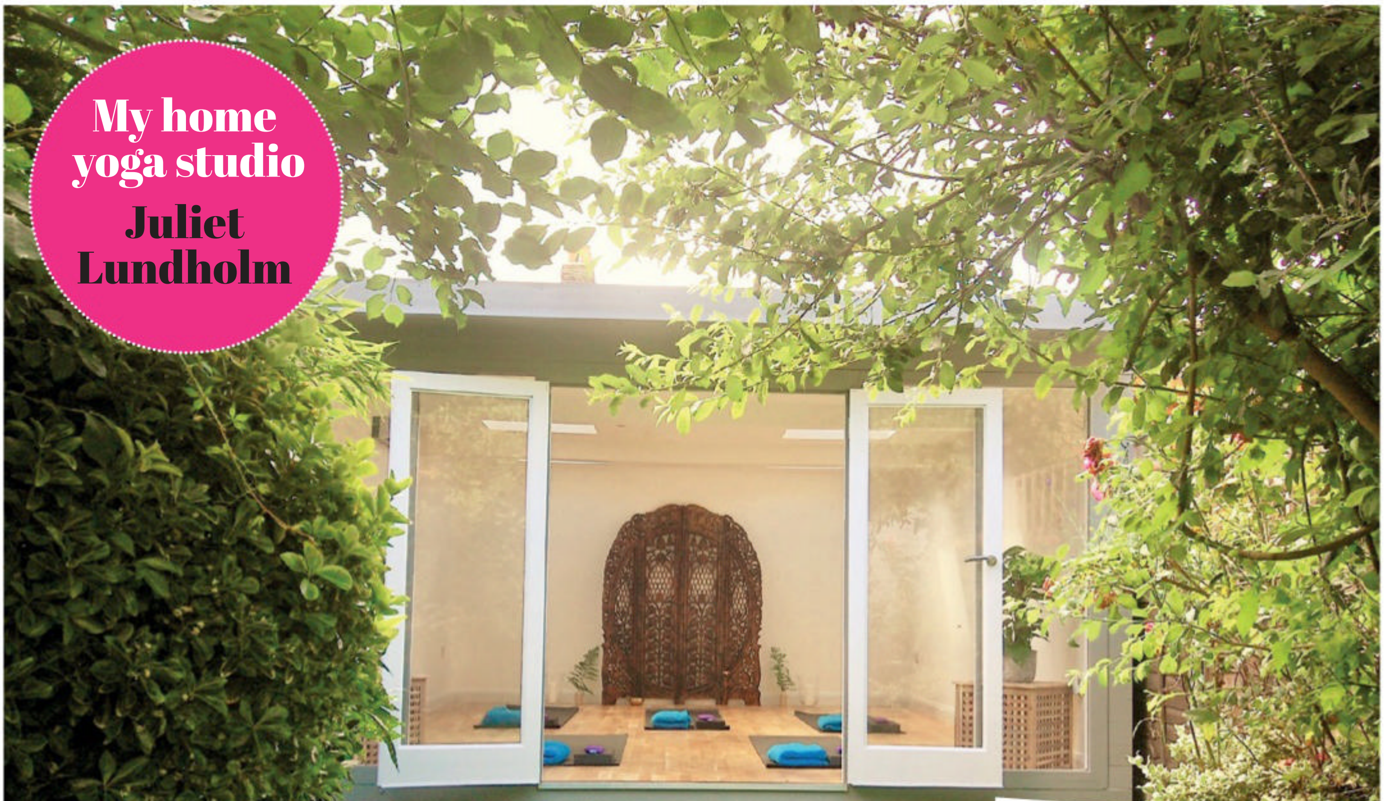
my confidence had been knocked by my corporate experience so taking such a financial and emotional risk was a huge step towards taking back control of my life. I had no idea if anyone would ever come. In fact, if I had thought too much about it, I think I would have been too scared to try, but my vision and intention was clear.

On opening the doors six years ago the students did come and we have built a wonderful, diverse community who now enjoy that slice of tranquillity I always hoped to offer from my little terrace house in the city. I run lots of classes, restorative workshops, rehabilitation sessions, privates and corporates, as well as working with business people, pregnant women, athletes and those with injuries. I love every moment of it.

It has not come without its challenges. I had storm damage, resident foxes and covid hit my small boutique space hard.

> "When you love what you do, when you love what you have created, when you remember the 'why' of your creation, that passion and faith in what you believe in will take you through any storm and hold you in any weather"

Working from home can also be isolating at times and I have three small children who share their garden with my business. But I have learnt this: When you love what you do, when you love what you have created, when you remember the 'why' of your creation, that passion and faith in what you believe in will take you through any storm and hold you in any weather…just as I hope my slice of studio space does for the students who come and visit. When I sit in my garden and look at the little doors to my space, I remember that anything is possible and you have to believe in yourself.



My home yoga studio

Juliet Lundholm

Why I do yoga

After 20 years of practice, Juliet Lundholm still holds a love for yoga. Here, she explains why she still bothers to get on the mat at all – and it might not be the answer you're expecting

As I come to almost two decades of practicing, and over a decade of teaching, I have found myself reflecting on why, through the increasing noise and responsibilities of life, I am still waving the flag for yoga. I am still holding my mat like I'd hold the hand of a dear old friend; still, after all these years.

Sometimes I find myself simply wondering: why do I still bother? Well, there are so many reasons to practice yoga, from the numerous health benefits, the postural changes, the increase in flexibility and strength and because of its stress-relieving and mindfulness qualities. But they are not my reasons.

When I put all that aside, there is one answer to why I find myself, all these years later, still coming back to that little rectangular space in front of me, and it is this: whether in the moment we realise it or not, yoga shines a big, bright light on our internal state of being and on the way we choose to navigate ourselves through life.

In that moment, on that mat, we are quiet, we tune into ourselves and we see, perhaps for the first time, the way we habitually respond, the thoughts that spring up through the quiet, the internal commentary that usually gets stuck in the noisy subconscious and it all now feels blaringly loud and sometimes uncomfortable.

The truth is, how we are on the mat is ultimately how we are in our lives — only now we can see it. When we can see, when the light of awareness that yoga offers us illuminates all this, we have the choice to make changes, to choose new responses that serve us, or to build a better habitual pathway.

Yoga then becomes a training ground for life, a system to re-assess where we are, where we want to go and who we want to be…and then it provides a safe place where we can practice it before we use it in our world.

Over time, our new habits on the mat will become new habits off the mat and this is what propels me back time and time again. Yoga will not make you perfect in a day. In fact, it will never make you perfect. What it will do is give you the opportunity and power to choose how you want to show up in your life, and the space to practice all this with compassion, acceptance and kindness. This is why, as I walk the winding road of life, my yoga mat is still never far away. This is the reason I still bother. ॐ

Find out more about Juliet Lundholm at: yogawithjuliet.co.uk

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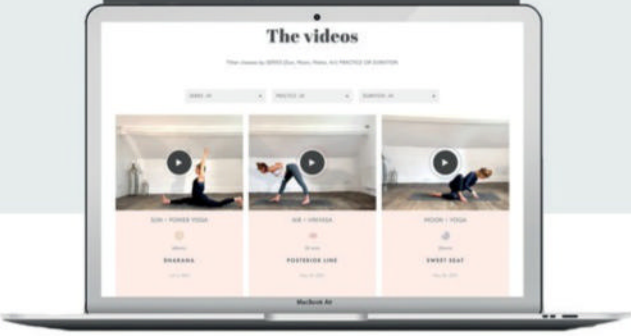

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YOGA Unpacked

AHIMSA – LIVE WITH LOVE

Ever been in a yoga class and not fully understood what the teacher is talking about? Bestselling author and creator of the top-rated Yoga Happy app, Hannah Barrett, is here to help. This month, she is unpacking the yogic concept of Ahimsa

What is ahimsa?

"I alone am responsible for my thoughts, words and actions"

At the heart of yoga is love. In The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the first of Pantajali's five yamas is ahimsa. The yamas can be thought of like our ethical backbone — ethical considerations on how to avoid harming ourselves or others.

The philosophy at first can feel overwhelming but it is the root of our whole yoga practice and once broken down you realise it can be applied to everything we do. We have the opportunity to practice the philosophy the yamas teach us through every interaction we have. And the more we practice them, the bigger ripple effect they will have. With them we are planting positive seeds of change for others to follow.

The first yama, ahimsa, translates to 'non-violence' or 'absence of injury' from Sanskrit; I like to think of it as a reminder of love. To act with love through our words, thoughts and actions. And not just towards others but to ourselves as well.

Ahimsa is arguably the most important of Patanjali's ethical codes, and all of the rest of the yamas build off ahimsa. It allows us to live a more conscious, balanced and harmonious life.

We can also look at Ahimsa in three different parts:

Inwardly – thoughts and behaviours that have a detrimental effect on ourselves, for example, limiting beliefs holding us back from our full potential.

Towards humanity – thoughts, words and actions that have a detrimental effect on other humans, for example, gossip and forgetting the power our words have on others.

Towards our Earth – behaviours that cause detriment to the world that we live in. For example, disregard to our planet by littering or not considering how much and what we are consuming.

How can we apply it to life now?

We are the only one who is responsible for our own words, thoughts and actions and we can choose to demonstrate love and kindness in everything we do.

A few examples of how we can practice non-violence in our daily interactions:

Kindness towards others – can you refrain from gossip and strive for harmony instead? Can you truly listen and be present with others? Can you practice kind deeds, not for any reward? And can you practice forgiveness even though it can feel impossible?

Ahimsa on the road – I am sure there have been moments in your car or on your bicycle where you have felt extreme anger and resentment against another road user. Instead of retaliating or letting those negative thoughts pulsate endlessly through your head, can Ahimsa inspire you to take a breath? Can it inspire you to find that needed pause and reflect on that person who just cut you up — maybe they just found out their mother died or they are rushing their wife to hospital?

Mother Earth needs us to care – what can you do today to make a positive impact on the environment? It could be walking instead of driving, recycling, composting, supporting local firms, planting trees or being mindful of where or what you are buying is coming from. Small steps lead to bigger steps. Don't think you don't make a difference because you absolutely do.

Self-study and journalling

Another key concept of yoga is self-study and uncovering our true identity and the layers that are born from our personal experiences, education, childhood, etc. One way of delving into self-study is through journalling and self-reflection.

Some journal prompts relating to Ahimsa to reflect on this month:

How can I introduce more self-care into my daily rituals? How can I make sure I look after myself as well as others?

Think of the last time you thought negatively about someone else. What drove that negative judgement and what can you do in future when those thoughts arise?

Bring to mind someone that you don't like. Notice the thoughts, feelings and emotions that appear. Can you try and think of this person instead with love, kindness and compassion for whatever they've been through that's resulted in them being like they are?

How can we apply ahimsa onto the yoga mat?

One of the main things I want to teach my students is the beauty of listening to our bodies and what is right for them at that moment in time (as we are constantly changing). The beauty in this listening means we can modify our practice to suit our needs and to avoid harm. Whether this is in the form of a prop or perhaps even finding child's pose instead of chaturanga.

Pose for ahimsa – Tadasana (mountain pose)

Stand at the top of your yoga mat with the feet together or hip distance apart. Feel the earth beneath you, spread and lift your toes and place them gently one by one on the ground. As you do, find a moment of gratitude for the earth beneath your feet. Press down firmly through the soles of the feet and imagine there's a hand just above the crown of your head, grow into the imaginary hand and feel the body activate as you do so, the core and legs engage and spine growing long.

As you rotate the arms outwards slightly so the palms can face forward, can this posture be your reminder of love and connection to this beautiful world? Your reminder to think, speak and act with kindness towards yourself and others.

Strive to incorporate this mindful philosophy in your everyday life and notice how things start to change, and how it has a huge impact on yours and others' happiness and freedom. ॐ

If you want to understand more about Ahimsa, check out Hannah Barrett's book Yoga Happy and the Yamas and Niyamas series on her app also called Yoga Happy!

Photos: Cecelia Cristolovean (yogaandphoto.com)

OMFM

OM FOR MEN

Inside:

Page 47 Man On The Mat: Warrior 1

Page 48 Sadhguru: Man On A Mission

Rob Lahoud @potentialofgrace, photographed by Aaron Dickfos @expedimage, expedimagephotography.com

MAN ON THE MAT WITH RAVI DIXIT

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VIRABHADRASANA

(WARRIOR 1)

In Sanskrit, ‘Vira’ means ‘hero’ or ‘warrior’ and ‘Bhadra’ is ‘good, blessed or fortunate’. This asana is named after the fierce warrior, Virabhadra, an avatar of Lord Shiva, symbolising positivity and our inner ability to overcome darkness.

BENEFITS

- Strengthens and stretches the shoulders, arms, legs, hips, ankles and back.
- Releases tension from the neck and shoulders.
- Opens the chest and lungs, improving breathing capacity.
- Increases flexibility of the spine and stimulates the spinal cord.
- Improves focus, balance and stability.
- Stimulates healthy circulation and metabolism.

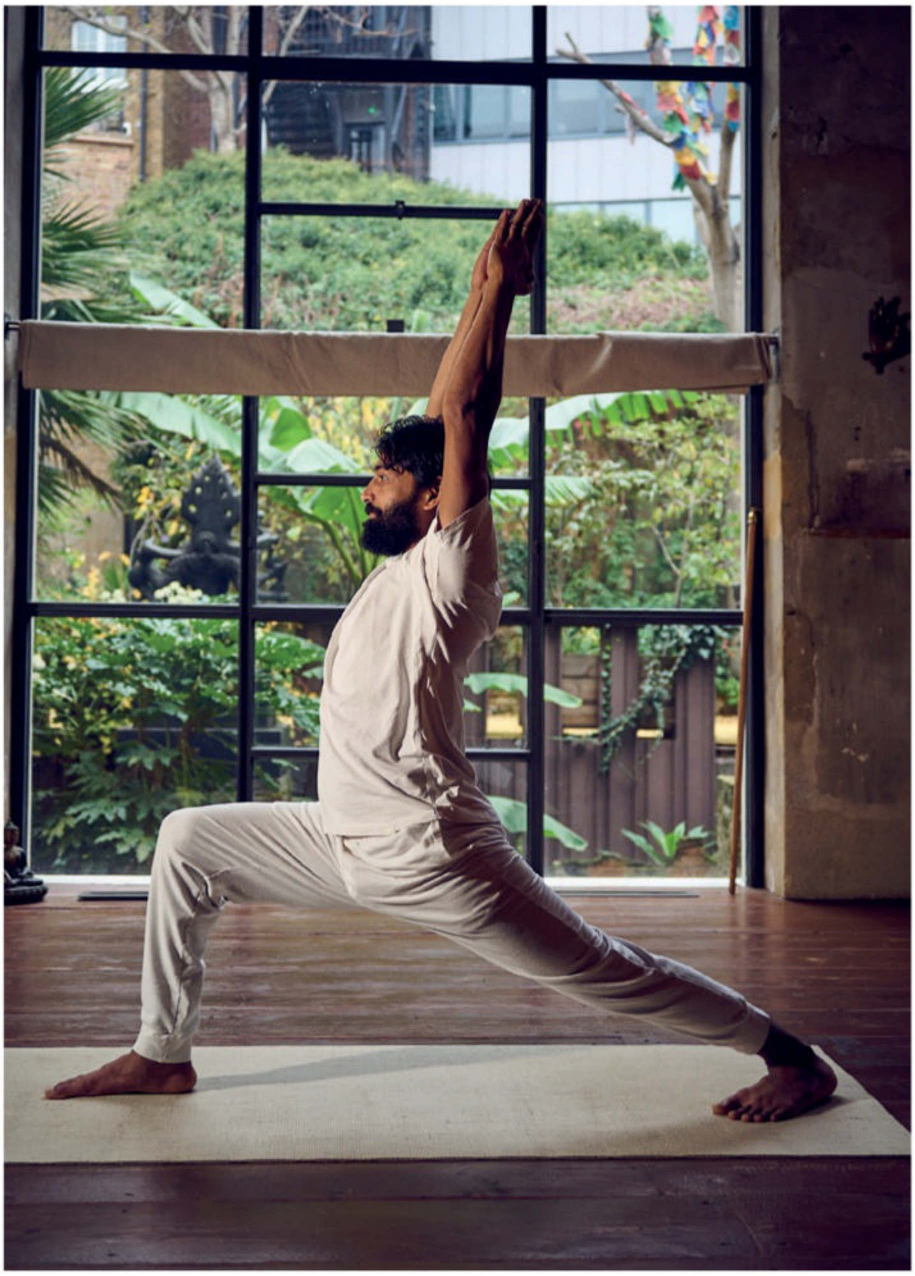

Photo: Andrew Prod (andrewprod.com)

MISTAKES

- Misalignment of the hips: both hips should be facing forward, parallel to each other. Make sure your hips are aligned properly before going further into the pose.
- Positioning of the back foot: move the back foot slightly into 45° to find your stability.
- It’s an easy mistake to bend your front knee too far forward. The front knee should be stacked over the ankle and the thigh should stay parallel over the ground, even as you deepen into the lunge.
- There is a tendency to lift the shoulder towards the ears. Actively draw the shoulders down from the ears, pull the shoulder blades back, and lift the sides of the chest.

TIPS

- For beginners, focus on grounding and correct alignment first by placing the hands on the hips, instead of lifting the arms up overhead. Look straight ahead and focus on your balance and breath.

AWARENESS

- Virabhadrasana requires awareness. Regular practice of this asana helps build stability and stamina, and can calm the mind and improves concentration.
- Holding the posture requires awareness of the breath and different muscles of the body to keep balance. This awareness sharpens the ability to have better control over the mind and can help regulate emotions.

Ravi Dixit is an Indian yoga teacher living in London, passionate about making traditional yoga understandable for everyone. Visit: ravi.yoga or connect on Instagram @raviyoga_goa

Sadhguru: man on a mission

Yogi and spiritual teacher Sadhguru, or Jaggi Vasudev, is the founder and head of the Isha Foundation in India, which has touched the lives of millions worldwide through its transformational programmes. OM caught up with him to learn more about his current environmental work — including a 30,000km motorbike trip across Europe and the Middle East in an effort to 'save soil' — and his ideas on life, love and happiness.

Yogi, mystic and visionary, Sadhguru is one of the most influential voices of our times. He has spoken at various forums across the world, including the UN world headquarters, UNESCO headquarters, World Economic Forum, the World Bank, the House of Lords, TED, Microsoft and Google. He has been invited to speak at leading educational institutions such as Oxford, Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Wharton and MIT among others. He is the recipient of three Presidential awards, including India's highest annual civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan.

Over the years, Sadhguru has launched various high-profile ecological initiatives. Project GreenHands, Rally for Rivers and Cauvery Calling address the urgent need to increase green cover, revitalise Indian rivers and restore soil health. As part of the Conscious Planet initiative, he has also launched the world's largest people's movement – Save Soil, which has so far reached over 3.91 billion people. These initiatives have been recognised globally as game-changers for establishing a blueprint for economic development that is ecologically sustainable and socially equitable.

Three decades ago, he founded Isha Foundation, a non-profit human-service organisation, with human wellbeing as its core commitment. The Foundation offers powerful yoga programmes for human transformation and wellbeing, and has initiated path-breaking outreach projects to uplift rural communities. It is supported by over 17 million volunteers worldwide.

Can you tell us a bit about your yoga background?

When I was just 12 years of age, we would go to our grandfather's ancestral home for the summer vacation. There was a well in the backyard, which was about eight feet in diameter and 150 feet in depth. In

summer, the water would generally be at least 60 to 70 feet below the ground level. One of the sports for us young boys was to jump into this well and climb up. I was very proud that I was good at it.

> “Yoga is the science of creating the right kind of chemistry. If you have the right kind of chemistry, being joyful and peaceful is the only way – it cannot be any other way.”

One day, a man who was over 70 years of age was simply standing there and silently watching us. Then, without a word, this man just walked to the well and jumped in. I thought he was finished, but he came up faster than me! I did not like it. Then I asked: “How?” He said: “Come, do yoga.” That was Maladihalli Swami. Like a puppy, I went behind him because I found him so superhuman; he could do things that no young man could do.

He is not my guru but he initiated me into some simple physical yoga. Though I was not given to any kind of discipline at that time, from that day somehow this yoga happened every day for the next 13 years, to the point where I ended up with huge experience, which changed everything about me.

Now, if I just sit for 20 seconds with my eyes closed in the morning, I am all charged up and ready – that is all the yoga that I do. Only if I am trying to manifest something, if I want to consecrate something, then I sit with my eyes closed; otherwise I am constantly in activity.

At age 65, you recently travelled 30,000km by motorcycle to launch the Save Soil movement. Did yoga help prepare you for the journey?

During the journey, people were asking me: “Sadhguru, what is the secret of your energy? How come your back is not broken?” My back is a good advertisement for a yogic back! From the age of 12, I have been practicing a powerful system of yoga called Angamardana. Angamardana literally means to have complete mastery over your limbs. A minor aspect of Angamardana is Upa-Yoga. It has kept me going for nearly 53 years — and even now during that journey.

You’ve talked before about the need to create a conscious planet, what does that mean for you — and how does this tie in with the Save Soil motorbike journey?

Today, we have found many aspects of our life to differentiate between human beings, to confront and conflict with each other. If people do not understand what the cosmic consciousness which unifies us is they must at least understand that soil is a unifying force. Soil is the source of our existence. Whatever race, religion, nationality, caste, creed we may have, essentially, we all come from the soil, we live off the soil and when we die, we go

back to the soil. We have to touch base with common factors among all of us. Otherwise, with our very intelligence and competence, we will destroy each other in the end.

There is currently talk of a mental health pandemic. What do you think is the solution?

Maybe three years ago, you did not know what the word 'pandemic' meant, but today everyone knows it for sure. Now the World Health Organisation is talking about a mental health pandemic. Do you think we have enough psychiatrists to handle eight billion people? No. We need to understand that our physical and mental health are both fundamentally our responsibility. The source of our wellbeing, joy and love is invested in us. This is what yoga is about: how to live with exuberance and ecstasy every moment of your life. This is the most needed thing in the world right now. As there is a science and technology to fix the external situations, there is a whole science and technology to fix the inner situations. This is what we are calling 'Inner Engineering'. You can change the very fundamental chemistry of who you are.

Some people seem to have it all: great job, house, car, partner, but still they're unfulfilled. Why? What's the most secure way to lasting happiness?

Every human experience is rooted in a certain type of chemistry that you carry at that moment. What you call as peace, joy, stress, love are just different kinds of chemistry. If you are peaceful, the chemistry within you is in a certain way. Or, if you can create that kind of chemistry within, you naturally become peaceful.

Negative feelings arise simply because we have not taken charge of this inner chemistry. To do so will demand that you give your internal faculties a little more attention. The good news is, with the right kind of practices, you can bring balance to your internal chemistry. Yoga is the science of creating the right kind of chemistry. If you have the right kind of chemistry, being joyful and peaceful is the only way – it cannot be any other way.

Many people struggle to find lasting relationships. Is there really such a thing as a soulmate?

Many people subscribe to the idea that there is a single 'right' person out there for everyone. What is needed to make a relationship successful is not the perfect person – there is no perfect person on the planet. What you need is absolute integrity. Whether someone is watching or not, you should act in the same way. Who you are should not change depending upon where you are and who with. Once you have established your way of being, interacting with another person can be a joy. Another aspect is that if you try to extract something out of each other, and you or the other person do not get what you both want, there will be constant conflict.

Do not look for the ideal partner – there isn't one. If you understand that it is your needs that make you seek a companion, find someone who is reasonably compatible with you. If you accept, respect, love, include, care for, and take responsibility for each other, it can be a beautiful relationship.

What are your future plans going forward?

In 2024, we will be launching a global movement called Conscious Planet because there is only one problem on the

planet – the human being. If this human being is a little more sensible, so many problems would disappear right now.

What is the problem with the human being? Human being is the peak of evolution on this planet, the flower of life on this planet, the most intelligent, competent and capable, but one big mess because once you attain to this level of intelligence and capability, everything that you do is supposed to happen consciously. The moment you do the same things compulsively, unconsciously, humanity is a disaster. That is where we are right now. People are expecting some aliens to come and trouble us, but we are capable of destroying ourselves totally out of our own silly nonsense. What we need is a Conscious Planet. Conscious Planet does not mean the planet is going to glow with a halo. It is you and me. Human beings have to become conscious. So in this direction, we will be launching this movement, where we want at least 1.5 billion people to have one simple spiritual process so that they will close their eyes and do something for their wellbeing.

Outside of work, what do you do during any downtime?

I have an indiscriminate sense of passion towards everything. There were lots of things I did at one time, but these days, time is not allowing me to do that. So generally, if I have little time, all I do is play golf because that is safe and within the city, and I can get back in time to do something else. But if an entire day is left to me, I will close my eyes and sit because I am at my best when I truly have nothing to do. ॐ

Join Sadhguru, in person, at his first London event in four years, 'Sadhguru in London: Meet, Mingle and Meditate' on 18th June. Discover your natural state of freedom and joy. Register at: sadhguru.co/london-mag

om yogashow

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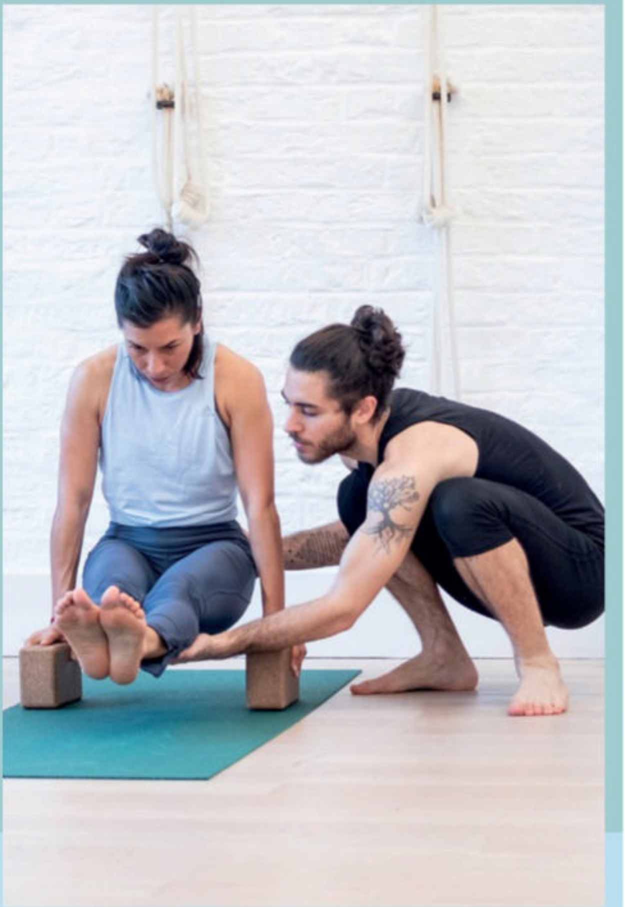

Embodied Living: Mindfulness & Yoga for Life's Everyday Challenges

Emerging into wholeness

Creating the bonds of deep, heartfelt connection with ourselves. **By Lauren Bloxham**

The early summer is a great time to look around and notice emergence in nature…from buds on the roses, to vegetable plants flowering with the promise of fruit. The warmth of the early summer invites an emergence not just in nature, but in us too. Perhaps we feel we want to be outside more, maybe we're tantalisingly close to a holiday and feel the sense of spreading out, of taking up space that time off, or time in the outdoors, invites.

Perhaps this sense of emergence is a slow gentle one, one that's attuned to the pace of the season and our own innate pace and rhythm for life. If our lives are in balance, then the gradual warming of the early summer is a welcome evolution, a feeling of emerging strength and a fruitfulness that we know is just around the corner.

The subtlety of emergence is within us too. Thoughts, ideas, plans and projects. They all require cultivating, nurturing, and tending in order to emerge, manifest and give fruit. Our gardens and the outdoors are great teachers, and their rules and requirements are just as appropriate when it comes to tending our own inner worlds.

More subtle still is the sense of our own self emerging. When we listen closely to ourselves there is a voice; as Rumi says, "there is a voice that doesn't use words, listen". Approaching our innermost self, learning to listen deeply in order that we can fulfil our own needs and desires and ultimately become more of ourselves is a skill. It's something that requires the same degree of nurture and tending as any of our plans, projects or gardens.

Our deep inner experience guides us with feeling. Whether it's 'gut instinct' or 'heartfelt desire', these are the depths within us which, when nurtured, become our greatest sources of strength and nourishment. It follows, then, that if we ignore our gut instinct and heartfelt desires, if we deny them or diminish them, then who or what is it we are in service to? Perhaps the status quo? Maybe we've put other people's needs, or the idea of other people's needs ahead of our own? It's possible we've subscribed to a way of being that seems socially appropriate or acceptable, and all the while our inner worlds have become neglected. It's when we're living with our neglected selves that we feel the greatest desire to escape. It's then that we so desperately

need holidays, time off and time away; it's the cultivation of a life in service to something outside of us, but is fundamentally disconnected from what it is we so dearly need and desire. The energy it takes to conform, and deny our needs, gut instincts and heartfelt desires will eventually lead us to burnout and to our bodies firmly saying 'no'.

So how do we navigate the space in-between? How do we gently, lovingly guide ourselves back towards ourselves and find the courage to emerge into our wholeness?

First, we listen…

Taking time to sit in meditation, time alone to walk and take in nature, building time within our days and weeks to rest and tune in to ourselves is vital.

Take a moment now. Find a comfortable seat, take a deep breath, and invite your body to take up space. Give the breath permission to drop into the belly and exhale completely. Drop the shoulders, unfurrow the brow. Close the eyes and place the left hand on the heart and the right hand on the belly.

Say to yourself: "I am here for you, and I am listening."

Give yourself a moment to absorb this intention, listen for a reply. Sometimes the body responds with the kind of relief which brings a tear to the eyes, a yawn, or maybe the heart or gut leaps with recognition.

Repeat to yourself: "I am here for you, and I am listening."

It's in these quiet moments that we can find clarity, a gentle reminder of who we are and what it is we need. At times, clarity might feel elusive, and that's when we know we need to come back to the practice again. But finding clarity, or simply seeking it through quiet practice offers us the gift of connection. Deep heartfelt connection.

Once we form these bonds it's much harder to ignore, overlook or deny ourselves. And once we're connected, the nourishment that connection brings will guide us to seek further nourishment for its strength and growth. The steps towards a life that we no longer need to escape from can be gentle, slow, and sustainable. They don't have to be wholesale, immediate or insensitive to the status quo we have invested ourselves in.

In his poem, 'The bud' Galway Kinnell writes:

"The bud
stands for all things,
even for those things that don't flower,
for everything flowers, from within,
of self-blessing".

Our inner worlds are like the buds of early summer, and our practice of connecting with ourselves is what it takes to flower. We may need to re-learn and re-teach ourselves along the way but emerging into our own wholeness is a gentle evolution which simply requires our presence, attention, love and permission. ॐ

Practice yoga with Lauren Bloxham online at: blackdogliving.com or in person in West Cornwall and at Sandy Acres Cornwall, Yoga, Wellness & Walking Weekends, various dates throughout 2023. Connect on Instagram @blackdogliving

om yoga show

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The kaleidoscope of the mind

Understanding the activity of the mind is the first step in learning to find your authentic self or centre of consciousness.

By Carole Merritt

The mind is composed of four interconnected parts: the manas, the budhi, the chitta and the ahamkara. These four parts work together, seamlessly, to create the total mind, or antahkarana.

A quick description of each of the four parts of the mind:

Manas: The manas is a sensory processor. Manas is always busy with simple and basic functions that take up a lot of our mental energy. All of the sensory input form the world around you, and from inside your body, must be identified, categorised and a simple determination is made about what to do with the information.

> "Meditation allows us to tease apart the colours of the kaleidoscope so that we might observe the activity of each area of the mind. This observation allows us to see the impact of the interconnections between the areas of the mind."

Budhi: The Budhi makes higher-level decisions and judgements based on information from the manas mind, coloured with knowledge from past experiences and hopes for the future. Intuition and creativity have a home in the Budhi.

Chitta: Chitta contains our memories and impressions of past experiences. Chitta affects the perception of input to the Manas.

Ahamkara: The Ahamkara is the part of you that identifies your self as a being

separate from others in the world.

As we move through our lives, we perceive the world through a kaleidoscope of the four colours of the mind. Each area influences all the others. Our true self is at the centre of the kaleidoscope — never changing and never moving. It is the centre from which all action, perception and emotion originate.

Each area of the mind is just as important as the others; it is important that we perceive that simple activity of Manas to be as essential as the others.

Meditation practice

Meditation allows us to tease apart the colours of the kaleidoscope so that we might observe the activity of each area of the mind. This observation allows us to see the impact of the interconnections between the areas of the mind.

The most accessible way to begin to tease apart the activity of the different areas is to approach through the Manas mind. Deliberately and consciously observing the sensory input to the body, then focusing in on one aspect allows us to still the activity of the Manas. With time and practice, the Budhi emerges as well as the Chitta and the Ahamkara.

As the four areas of the mind become distinct, the centre becomes prominent. We can begin to see the activity and interconnections that filter our perceptions and guide our actions. This understanding helps us to know where and how past perceptions or desires for the future impact our actions, judgements and decisions.

On a daily basis, the four areas appear to work together so seamlessly and quickly that we may be unaware of their impact on each other. Meditation effectively puts a pause on the play of the mind and allows us to see clearly.

> "On a daily basis, the four areas appear to work together so seamlessly and quickly that we may be unaware of their impact on each other. Meditation effectively puts a pause on the play of the mind and allows us to see clearly."

How to use meditation to discover the four areas of the mind…and the centre:

1. Find a comfortable position where you will not fall asleep and where your breath can come easily. Try to find a time and place where you will not be interrupted.

2. Begin to notice the sensory input from outside your body. Notice the temperature and feeling of the air on your skin, the smells and sounds around you. Notice the way your clothes feel on your body and how your body is touching the floor or seat.

3. Begin to notice sensory input from inside your body. Notice the natural rhythms of your breath, your pulse or heart rate, digestion or any other sensations from within.

4. Begin to focus on your breath and let all else fall away.

5. Become an observer to the activity of the mind as the Budhi, Chitta and Amharka take shape.

6. Note your true self emerge!

You may find that you need to practice steps one to four for some time before steps five and six present themselves. That's totally fine. Above all, enjoy the process! ॐ

Carole Merritt is a yoga teacher from Ottawa, Canada. She has developed an online course to help students develop a personal practice that is unique, efficient and an effective use of time on and off the mat. Find out more at: yogaforyouathome.com or connect on Instagram @carolemerritt1000

Journalling for *anxiety*

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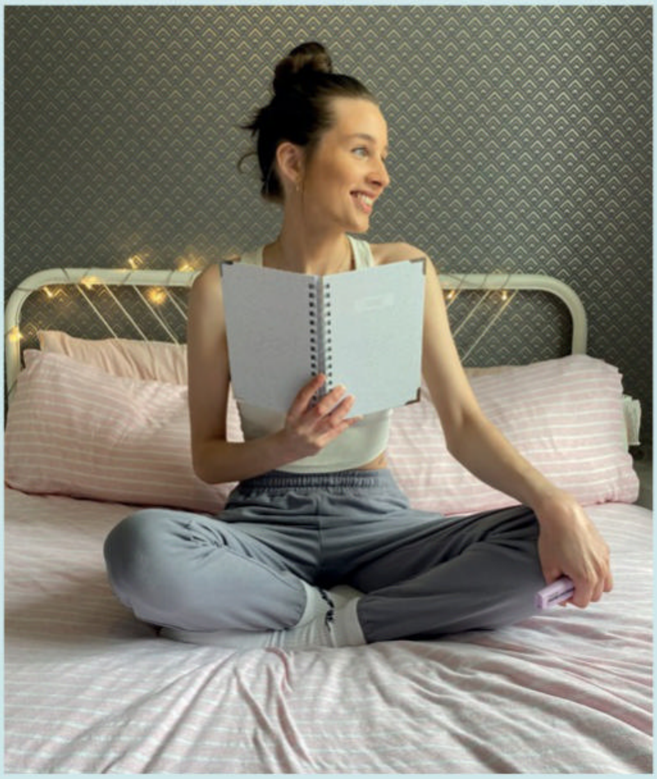
Laura Schmidt found a way to manage her anxiety and mental health challenges during the covid lockdowns through journalling. She believes the simplicity of the process can help others too

Journalling has been portrayed in TV shows and films as teenage girls writing in an overly doodled notebook with a padlock. Writing things like, 'Dear diary' and all about her most recent crush. This was definitely the image I had of journalling for many years. However, when my own mental health hit rock bottom at the start of the pandemic and lockdowns, I turned to journalling to help me cope — and what happened was life changing.

I have always struggled with mental health issues since I was a child. Anxiety, panic attacks and depression have been constant presences in my life. I always assumed it would get easier as I got older, but the opposite happened. It got worse. It hit an all-time low when, in 2020, I found that my mental health was rapidly deteriorating. Due to the uncertainty, the restrictions, lack of control, I was really struggling to cope. I didn't know what to do, so I started journalling my feelings just as a way to vent and maybe feel the slightest bit better. At first, there was a small relief having expressed my emotions, but other than that, no big difference. I was still anxious.

Yet I wanted to stick with it. If nothing else happened, I would have a historic log of what it was like during those times. I dedicated 10 minutes before bedtime to journalling about my day, what happened, how I felt, something to be grateful for and what I hoped for tomorrow. I managed to incorporate it into my routine and it soon became an integral part of my night.

Over time, I found I had more self-awareness; I understood myself better. I had better clarity over situations. I was also sleeping better! I was struggling with insomnia before but it pretty much disappeared after I started journalling. Most importantly, I was feeling more productive and creative.



So much so that I wanted to start a business. At first, I was unsure what I wanted to do but one evening it dawned on me — I wanted to raise awareness of the benefits of journalling. I wanted to share this with others, break the stigma and create something beautiful.

So I started my business, Lovendu, with just £10. I began promoting on social media and the business just took off. To this day, I owe my success to journalling! I haven't missed a single day and my self-awareness has only increased, my sleep is good, and my business has thrived. I'll be real: it hasn't cured me at all, I still struggle and have anxiety, panic attacks and some bad days. But my mindset around those situations has improved overall, so I have a much better perspective and awareness of what is going on.

Here are five ways journalling can be a helpful tool for managing anxiety:

Identifying triggers: Writing in a journal can help you identify patterns and triggers that contribute to your anxiety. By recognising these triggers, you can learn to avoid or manage them better.

Processing emotions: Writing can be an effective way to process and express emotions that may be contributing to your anxiety. By getting your thoughts and feelings down on paper, you can gain a better understanding of what is causing your anxiety and how to cope with it.

Challenging negative thoughts: When you are anxious, it can be easy to fall into negative thought patterns. Journalling can help you challenge these negative thoughts and replace them with more positive and realistic ones.

Tracking progress: By keeping a journal, you can track your progress over time. This can help you see how far you have come and give you motivation to continue working on managing your anxiety.

Finding solutions: Journalling can also help you brainstorm solutions to your problems. By writing down your worries and concerns, you can come up with practical solutions to help you manage them.

Overall, journalling can be a helpful tool for managing anxiety by providing a safe and private space to explore your thoughts and feelings. It can help you gain insight into your triggers, process your emotions, challenge negative thoughts, track progress, and find solutions to your problems.

I'm a true believer that journalling and planning can help you improve your life. I have realised that the true work comes from within. Although my mental health creates everyday challenges for me and I am unable to do some things others may take for granted, I found the determination and strength to create and run my own business — something that wouldn't have happened without journalling. Why not give it a try?

*Laura Schmidt is the founder and creator of Lovendu, which creates wellness journals for all kinds of situations, from overthinking to self-love and manifestation. Discover the beautiful range online at: lovendu.co.uk or on Instagram @lovendu_*

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What is Tantra?

All you need to know about the world of Tantra but were too afraid to ask.

By Sofia Sundari

As yoga has become common practice for so many we're hearing the word Tantra more often, especially on social media. But what exactly is it and how does it benefit our health and wellbeing?

Tantra is an ancient spiritual path that, like yoga, originated in India thousands of years ago. It involves recognising our eternal nature whilst being active in the world. Tantra invites us to have a life of totality, to trust completely, to love fully, to jump into life without a safety net; ultimately, Tantra invites us to expand into our true self, our inherent divinity.

Walking this path isn't only focused on sex (as is popularised in the mainstream media) but in Tantra we recognise that everything is a product of sex, so sexual energy is seen as the root energy of everything. Sexual pleasure is seen as a way to experience the divine within ourselves and, by doing, so we are able to recognise and connect with our own true divinity. When we address this energy we tap into the force of all energy and from there we learn the energetic mastery of life. Tantra teaches us how energy flows and channels through us and how we impact others through our energy. Once mastered, this allows us to enter magnetism where living a full and abundant life is magnetised towards us. Tantra is essentially a system of life mastery; by understanding tantric energetics we access our human potential.

The alignment with the self Tantra leads us to is the key to a person achieving sovereign wholeness. This is when a person reaches a state of knowing who they are and that they don't need to push or prove anything. They feel comfortable in their body and there is great peace of mind.

As an energetic science, Tantra incorporates the mind, body, and spirit, and it's known for its various practices, including meditation, yoga, and breathwork, all of which lead to significant benefits to a person's overall health, both physical and mental. When combined with the wisdom that we get to understand and feel on a cellular level, we begin to understand how energy vibrates inside us and all the karmic imprints that are in the way of being abundant and successful get shaken and moved. As people, we try to protect ourselves from this natural fullness, this abundance, and we create layers of protection instead of softening into what is actually meant for us, what is our true nature.

As we move through life, we tend to collect painful emotional knots in the body; when we work with the emotional body through Tantra, we work to undo those knots and untangle. But we don't have to do it from a therapy approach. In Tantra we aren't healing anything, we are returning ourselves to purity; our truest, purest state of being. Seeing these things clearly allows us to understand and bring them back to source and they dissolve. For example, for many people shame is a big block in the body, and often this begins with sexuality and moves into a general feeling of shame. When we see that shame, acknowledge it, breathe into it and love it, it returns to purity and gets dissolved. This is when you see real improvements in all areas of your life; changes in your body, your behaviour and, in-turn, your relationships.

Tantra is all about nurturing the relationship we have with ourselves. Everything starts with us as individuals understanding that we are our main provider, we are our main beloved, we are the ones that need to treat our hearts and bodies like the most precious thing on this planet. It's only within us — and everything else is reflected back to us energetically.

Benefits of Tantra for a person's health include:

Reducing stress and anxiety

Tantra involves a lot of meditation, which has been proven to reduce stress and anxiety levels. The practice focuses on deep breathing, which slows down the heart rate and lowers blood pressure, resulting in a calm state of mind. These practices emphasise the importance of being present in the moment and connecting with our bodies and this intuition helps achieve a more pleasurable, healthy life. Tantra teaches us to let go of negative emotions and focus on positive energy, which further helps to reduce stress and anxiety.

Boosting self-confidence

Tantra encourages people to love, forgive and accept themselves fully. It teaches people to let go of self-judgement and to embrace their flaws and imperfections. By learning to love and accept ourselves, we can improve our self-confidence and self-esteem. This can have a positive impact on all areas of our lives, including our relationships, careers, and personal growth.

Enhancing physical health

Tantra incorporates various physical practices, including yoga and breathwork, which can help improve a person's physical health. Yoga is known to improve flexibility, strength, and balance, while breathwork can help to improve lung capacity and oxygenate the body leading to a healthier more alkaline body. We also address karmic imprints that are reflected in the body. I have seen miraculous healing taking place in an instant, when an old emotional charge is released.

Deepening spiritual connection

Tantra is a spiritual practice that helps people to connect with their higher selves and the universe. It teaches people to be present in the moment and to connect with their spiritual energy. By deepening their spiritual connection, people can find greater meaning and purpose in their lives, which leads to a more fulfilling and satisfying life.

Improving sexual health

Tantra teaches people to be present during sex and to connect with their partner on a deeper level. By encouraging people to slow down and focus on the sensations they are experiencing through embodied intimacy they enjoy every part of sex rather than racing to orgasm.

By learning that a man's arousal pattern starts in the lingam (penis) and moves outwards, whereas a woman's arousal pattern begins on the outside of the body and moves inward towards the yoni (vagina) — which are the opposite of one another — couples learn how to give and receive deeper levels of pleasure, which leads to a more satisfying sex life.

Once you learn more about sexual energy and arousal you are able to raise this healing energy in the body without releasing it through orgasm which leads to enhanced pleasure. In the long run, orgasms often become more intense, last longer and are more satisfying. Tantra also helps people to overcome sexual inhibitions and to explore new ways of pleasure by recognising that sexual pleasure is an expression of the divine within us.

It is important to note that Tantra is not simply about sexual techniques or pleasure, but rather about cultivating a deeper awareness and connection with the self, your partner, and the universe at large.

Lifemastery

When we understand tantric energetics we get the keys that unlock all doors. We learn how to energetically take up space, how to channel supreme knowledge through our speech and writing, how to cultivate magnetism and maintain attraction in long-term relationships, how to heal naturally, and how to tap into our highest potential in this life.

In conclusion, Tantra is a path of spiritual growth and self-discovery which leads to cultivating a deep connection with the body, heart, and soul. If you're looking to improve your overall health and wellbeing, Tantric practices could change your life.

Sofia Sundari is a Transformational Leader & Tantric Energetics Expert. Find out more at: sofiasundari.com

5 tips for incorporating Tantric practices into your life

1. Get into the habit of bringing your undivided attention to the smallest activities throughout the day. For example, when you are washing your hands allow yourself to fully experience the water running down your skin, the texture of the soap, the sensations of your hands touching each other. With this approach, doing dishes is not boring anymore!

2. When you are talking to someone, look them in the eyes and imagine that you are listening to them with your whole body. Don't think about how you are going to respond, don't analyse what they are saying, offer your full presence to them as a gift.

3. Train yourself to notice beauty. Allow yourself to experience it fully. If you see something that's pleasing to your senses, take time to take it in and be nourished by experiencing the thing you are looking at, smelling, hearing or tasting.

4. Throughout the day, do a body scan and check where your breath is; most people walk around with chronic tightness in their jaw, shoulders and pelvic floor as well as very shallow breath. These habits unnecessarily overstimulate the sympathetic nervous system giving your brain a signal that you are not safe. When you undo the tension and deepen your breath you come back home to the safety of your body. That's when you come back to the present and start to experience life more fully.

5. Take your nourishment seriously. Be it through taking time to fully enjoy the taste of your meal, turning showering into a sacred experience, or taking a full day each week dedicated to honouring the Queen or King that you truly are.

Time to REPAIR

How just five minutes of yoga a day can help body and mind repair, recover and recuperate. By Vicky Fox

In the last 15 years since I trained to be a yoga teacher, I have always found time for yoga. But to make that statement, I have had to drop my harsh judgement on how I define a 'yoga practice' and what I regard as the correct amount of time required for this.

Have I always practiced a 90-minute class with asana, mudras, mantras and meditation? No, I definitely haven't. But when I stop labelling my practice of yoga as a timed achievement, including a certain balance of asana and meditation, I can honestly say I practice yoga every day. Because yoga is a practice, not an achievement, something I come back to day after day; it is something to receive rather than achieve.

The first limb of yoga is ahimsa, meaning non-harming, or the absence of violence, and this is an integral part of the ancient spiritual teachings of the Vedas. The practice of kindness is ahimsa and therefore when we are being kind we are practicing yoga. I try, and fail, every day to be kind. Kind in the way I speak to myself and how I judge myself; I fail as the critic inside my head (called 'Vicky') is often unkind towards me. She judges me as lazy for not having achieved the things in my day that I would like to have achieved and she often queries my ability to be a yoga teacher when I don't have the correct number of hours in my day for my own practice. I grew up with 'more is more', so it is hard for me to practice 'less' and to believe that this is actually 'more'. However, I have to keep coming back to yoga equals kindness…and if I am practicing kindness to myself and others, then I am practicing yoga and so this is what I work on, on a daily basis.

The pressure of time is something that I regularly hear from students in class. With a sense of apology, people explain how they didn't have time to practice yoga. So, what happens if we set the bar low and create smaller, more achievable goals, especially when coming back or starting yoga after a period of bed rest or inactivity due to illness.

> "You don't need to feel good to come to class or to practice yoga, but you will feel better after."

I always ask my students: "How much time can you give to a yoga practice?" That's because I have experienced the full benefit of shorter asana and meditation practices on days when I am time constrained and still felt the benefit of greater connection to myself; I always

Photos: yogamatters.com

feel better than I did when I started my practice.

This is key — feeling better than you did before you started your practice. So, I tell people you don't need to feel good to come to class or practice yoga, but you will feel better after. And, as long as I have time to consciously connect to my breathing and move my body, whilst observing my judgmental mind and coming back to my breath, then I feel I am 'doing yoga'.

The benefit of practicing yoga, consciously breathing and moving, is that the breathing signals to the nervous system that your body is in a safe place to start to repair, nourish and nurture itself. This is why I wanted to share with people how we all have time to repair if we start small. Start with five minutes a day and see what happens. If I sit and breathe consciously for five minutes I know that although I will not be able to change my surroundings and whatever is being thrown at me that day, I will feel calmer, less reactive and therefore more able to cope with my day. This just feels like such a huge gift and something I would really like to share.

When I wrote my book 'Yoga for Cancer' I wanted to share my experience of how yoga can help address some of the side effects of treatment for cancer; the things I have learnt in my decade of teaching classes for anyone impacted by cancer. When I finished the book I felt I had so much more to share on how yoga can be a great tool for helping our bodies repair on many levels — the physical, the mental, the energetic levels. And that when we do, we can connect more deeply to our intuitive body, that bit inside us that knows the answers, which we might need to tap into when moving from being a patient to becoming a co-crafter of our own wellbeing.

I wanted to take the pressure off feeling that a yoga practice had to be 60 or 90 minutes long. If you are recovering from surgery or treatment for cancer you might not have the energy levels or time to practice for long periods. We lose strength and lean body mass quickly when we have periods of bed rest and therefore fatigue is a common side effect.

So, we need to start small, building a practice incrementally, and five minutes at a time is a great place to start.

Yoga is not just the physical practice of asana; it is very much a 'workout' for our mind. Our mind, where we process our experiences, uses up a lot of energy when we are stuck in the past wishing something wasn't happening to us or projecting fearfully into the future, worrying about things that might never happen. Mudras, mantras, meditation and breathing techniques can help us focus our mental energy, which means we have more energy for living in this moment right now as our mind isn't so scattered or dissipated. This is challenging because our mind's main focus is survival and when we experience anxiety, fear and stress we can find that our mind repeats old patterns of behaviour in response to stressful events.

By starting with five minute baby steps we can create a regular practice of yoga to create a routine. Routine is key, as Michael Brown says in 'The Presence Process': "Routine becomes what the structure of the word reveals, our route in".

By repeating small practices we start to sense the familiar feeling of peace or the feeling of being less reactive to the challenges we are facing. Building positive habits, five minutes at a time, creates new patterns of behaviour that are empowering, kind, peaceful and put the body in the best place for repairing. 🕉

Vicky Fox is the author of Time to Repair: How Yoga Can Restore Body And Mind In 5 Minutes A Day (Hammersmith Books)

eat drink *yoga*

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Tomato time

British Tomato Fortnight runs till 11th June, so here are three recipes inspired by the flavoursome red fruit to brighten up your kitchen, courtesy of the British Tomato Growers' Association

British Tomato & Nectarine Fattoush

SERVES 4

This Lebanese salad is an absolute texture bonanza: you've got crunch, juiciness, and tang. Don't worry if you don't have all the ingredients, go with whatever you have in your fridge. Many things work in this - raw peas, sweetcorn, fennel, pomegranate seeds, celeriac, kohlrabi, broad beans, raw asparagus, pineapple, plums and grapes.

- 2 large pita bread or other flatbread, opened up like a book
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 nectarine, not-too ripe, de-stoned and chopped
- 1 cucumber, deseeded and chopped
- 100g (3.5 oz) radishes, chopped
- 350g (12.3 oz) ripe baby tomatoes, mix of colours, halved
- A large handful each of parsley and mint leaves, roughly chopped
- 3 spring onions, finely sliced
- 1 tbsp sumac (or extra lemon)
- Juice of ½ lemon

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan)/400°F/Gas 6. Lay out the pita, texture side-up on a small tray and brush both sides in a tablespoon of oil. Season lightly and place in the oven for 7-10 minutes until crisp and light golden. Remove and leave to cool.
2. Place everything except the oil and lemon in a big salad bowl.
3. Break in the crisp pita, season well, then throw in the sumac, squeeze in the lemon and drizzle over the olive oil. Toss everything well with your hands then taste and adjust the seasoning.

Recipe by British Tomato Growers' Association.

British Tomato Tarte Tatin

SERVES 4-6

This sensational savoury tart is made with caramelised onions and fresh British vine tomatoes. It's topped with puff pastry, baked, then flipped over onto a serving plate to reveal the beautiful tomatoes.

- 12 large British vine tomatoes
- 30g (1oz) plant-based butter
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 500g (17.6 oz) pack ready-to-roll puff pastry
- A little flour, for sprinkling
- 2 tbsp vegan pesto sauce
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Basil or thyme leaves, to garnish

1 Preheat the oven to 210°C (190° fan)/410°F/Gas 7. Halve the British tomatoes and set to one side.
2 Melt the butter in a frying pan or cast iron sauté pan (about 23cm in diameter) with a heatproof handle that will withstand oven temperatures. Fry the onions gently until soft – about 10 minutes. Add the caster sugar and cook for another few minutes until caramelised. Remove the pan from the heat.
3 Arrange the tomatoes in the frying pan, cut sides down, packing them in closely. Season with salt and pepper.
4 Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured surface to a circle a little larger than the frying pan. Trim with a sharp knife to make a neat circle. Spread the pesto sauce on top, to within 2cm of the edge. Put the pastry on top of the frying pan, pesto sauce side down. Tuck the edges down the sides of the pan.
5 Bake for 22-25 minutes, until risen and golden. Cool in the pan for 10-15 minutes. Place a serving plate on top, hold tightly, then invert and remove the pan to reveal the tart. Serve, garnished with basil or thyme (or both!).

COOK'S TIP: You could use a sheet of ready-rolled puff pastry to save time.

Recipe by British Tomato Growers' Association.

Vegan British Tomato Shakshuka

SERVES 4

Perfect for breakfast or brunch, this British tomato recipe tastes fantastic with crusty bread to mop up all the delicious juices.

- 500g (17.6 oz) British medium vine tomatoes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 red peppers, deseeded and sliced
- 1 yellow pepper, deseeded and sliced
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp mild chilli powder
- 1 tbsp tomato puree
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley, plus extra to garnish
- 150g (5.2 oz) non-dairy yogurt
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Crusty bread, to serve

1 Halve the British tomatoes and set to one side.
2 Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan that has a lid. Gently fry the onions, garlic and peppers in the covered pan for about 10 minutes, or until very soft.
3 Add the cumin seeds, chilli powder, tomato puree and parsley, stirring well. Season. Add the tomatoes and cook over a medium heat for about 8-10 minutes, uncovered, adding a splash of water if it begins to look too dry.
4 To serve, sprinkle with extra parsley and season with a little extra black pepper. Put the yogurt into a bowl and sprinkle with a little chilli powder. Serve alongside the Shakshuka with crusty bread.

COOK'S TIP: This is great as a sharing dish, where everyone just eats straight from the pan!

Recipe by British Tomato Growers' Association.

FERTILITY SNACKS

Quick and easy snacks and ideas for boosting fertility.

By Ro Huntriss

Can snacks fit into a fertility diet? There is scientific evidence for the benefits of certain foods, nutrients and dietary patterns on improving and supporting your fertility. How to put this into practice can still be confusing and overwhelming.

Looking at your snacks is a great place to start. Many people incorporate snacks into their daily lives to keep them feeling satisfied between meals. They can also be a great way to incorporate as many fertility supporting nutrients as possible and to increase your fruit and veg intake to at least five each day. Planning ahead to make sure you have healthy snacks on hand that can support your fertility is one step you can take today to optimise your diet for fertility.

Below are 10 great fertility-friendly snack ideas for when you're trying to conceive or just want to support your fertility.

1. Portion of fruit

Keep it simple. A portion of fruit can be a great and light fertility snack. This option provides you with antioxidants which may increase live birth rates, reduce the time to conception and improve egg and sperm quality.

Different fruits can provide different fertility-promoting nutrients and antioxidants. Try choosing a variety of colours and mix it up, maybe rotating what you buy each week. Having two different fruits a day can get you well on your way to eating your five-plus portions of fruit and vegetables per day.

2. Unsweetened plain or Greek yoghurt

Yoghurt is an excellent source of protein, which we need for all growth and development. Consuming more dairy is also related to increased chance of live births among women over the age of 35. Choose full fat dairy in your fertility diet as opposed to lower fat dairy as this is linked with reduced risk of problems with ovulation.

3. A handful of mixed unsalted nuts

Nuts are a fertility powerhouse. They contain fibre, protein, healthy fats, as well as selenium and vitamin E, both of which support fertility. They are the perfect handy fertility snack!

They are also a source of polyunsaturated fats, consuming more of which can have a positive impact on IVF outcomes.

You can choose as many different nuts as you like. Be mindful to include Brazil nuts though, as just two a day can provide you with your daily requirement of selenium. Getting enough of this nutrient can help reduce time to pregnancy.

4. Vegetable sticks with hummus dip

Sticks of carrot, pepper and/or cucumber are a perfect on-the-go fertility snack. Combine them with hummus to make your snack more filling and tasty.

Similarly to fruit, vegetables are a great source of fibre, antioxidants and a range of important vitamins and minerals. They are also lower in sugar than fruits, so they are a great way to reach your five a day. Plus, it incorporates more plant-based protein into your diet, which is helpful for fertility.

5. Oatcakes with unsalted nut butter

Oatcakes are high in fibre, low in sugar and are a source of wholegrain. Their fibre content means that they take longer to digest, helping your fertility snack to keep you feeling fuller for longer. Eating more fibre has also been related to improved ovarian function and is associated with higher chances of pregnancy.

6. Glass of milk

A glass of cow's milk is a great source of protein, B vitamins, iodine and calcium. Drinking milk can lower the risk of infertility by 70% compared with not drinking it.

Milk, especially cow's milk, is an important source of vitamin B12 in the UK. Getting enough vitamin B12 levels is very important as low levels have been reported in more than half of infertile women.

If you don't drink cow's milk, try a plant-based milk instead that is not sweetened and has added vitamins and minerals. Ones to look out for are iodine, vitamin B12 and calcium.

7. Whole wheat cracker with avocado, tomato and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil

Opting for wholegrains can help to keep blood sugar levels stable and can increase the likelihood of pregnancy after IVF.

With crackers, it's all about what you eat them with. For example, you can use them to experiment with different toppings to create a variety of different fertility snacks.

Avocados and extra virgin olive oil are a source of vitamin E, an antioxidant which can be helpful for both male and female fertility. Tomatoes contain lycopene, an antioxidant that has the potential to boost egg and sperm quality.

8. Popcorn

Popcorn is a brilliant and easy fertility snack. It is also a great source of whole grains, containing fibre, B vitamins, folic acid and antioxidants. All of which are nutrients that support your ability to conceive. Choose popcorn that has been popped by air rather than in oil. Versions that are lightly seasoned popcorn with salt or spices avoids added sugar and salt.

9. Edamame beans

Edamame beans are immature soybeans that come from East Asia. They are a great source of plant-based protein. In fact, not only that, they are a complete protein source, meaning that you are consuming all nine essential amino acids.

Edamame beans are a source of dietary soy whose intake may increase the chance of live birth when going through IVF. Roast them in the oven with a little olive oil and unsweetened desiccated coconut for a sweeter snack or go for chilli powder, cumin and paprika for a tasty, savoury crunch. Leave the beans to cool and enjoy.

10. Homemade roasted sweet potato crisps

Sweet potatoes are a good source of fibre and antioxidants such as beta-carotene and vitamin C. Owing to this, consuming enough of these nutrients can help reduce time to pregnancy in women who are unable to get pregnant without an explanation. Make your own versions of sweet potato crisps so that you can reduce the amount of salt and saturated fat compared with shop-bought alternatives. A little olive oil goes a long way and these crisps can be made in as little as 15 minutes. A perfect snack as part of a fertility diet. ॐ

Ro Huntriss is a leading dietitian and founder of Fertility Dietitian. Her first book on the topic, Deliciously Healthy Fertility, was published in March 2023. Visit: fertilitydietitian.co.uk

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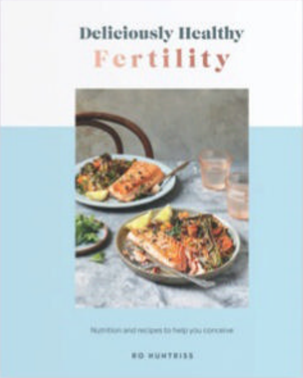
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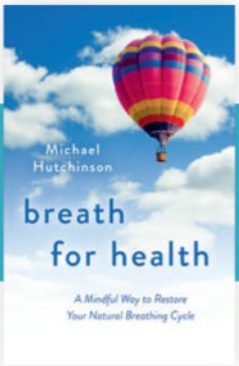
FURTHER READING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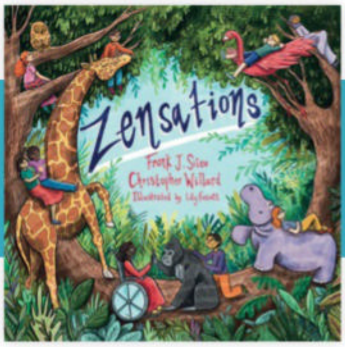
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Singing Dragon

A children's book, publishing this month, that focuses on the practice of body scanning. How you feel is very important, and a lot of the time our emotions might not just live inside our heads but in our bodies too — these are called bodily feelings, or 'Zensations', and you might find them all over your body. Learn how to feel our Zensations from the tips of our toes to the very top of our heads and find out all about the things our bodies are telling us.

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Mantra *for* mums

The power of mantra in parenthood.

By Sarah Ezrin

When an important work commitment conflicted with my eldest son's birthday, I got to do some of the most advanced yoga I have ever done. You may be thinking I did a fancy pose, but no movement was actually involved. I used mantra to adjust my mind from self-critical thoughts and guilt, toward thoughts of self-acceptance and kindness.

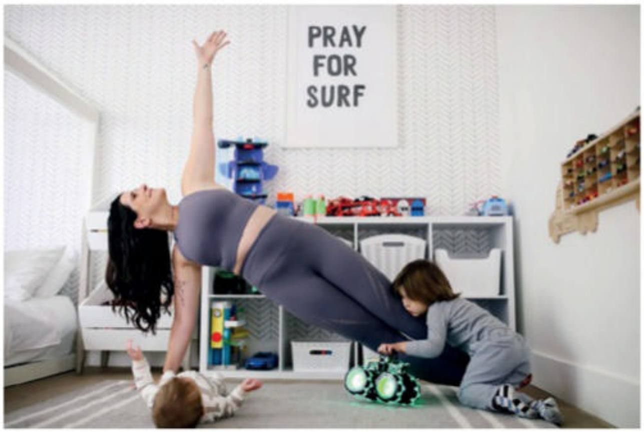
This wasn't the first time in my life that my career conflicted with my family. I have been trying to manage my work-life balance since before I even started having kids. I love what I do, so, there have been many 'Sophie's choice' (or more accurately 'Sarah's choice') moments throughout the years, where a big opportunity comes up on an important day for someone that I love.

Some choices are clearer to make than others. Like, turning down travel that would take me away from home on someone's birthday, but if a big opportunity arises for an hour or two, I often say 'yes'.

I say 'yes', because if I want to be fully present for all of the celebrations likely to come that day, weekend, or sometimes even week, I need to do something that helps me feel whole and full first. For me that is my work.

So, I said 'yes' to a speaking opportunity that took place on my son's birthday. But the second I did, the thought, "You're so selfish" started repeating in my head. For weeks, it was like a song stuck on repeat: "You're so selfish. You're so selfish."

This was not a new loop. It happens on a smaller scale almost every time I make a choice for myself. When I choose to do asana practice instead of chilling on a Sunday morning: "you're so selfish." When I choose to have dinner with friends instead of being there for bedtime: "you're so selfish." And when I choose to go to the loo unaccompanied: "you're so selfish!"



Even though I know in my gut and my heart that my motivation to take time for myself is ultimately so I can be more present with my family, my mind tends to be slower at accepting that truth. One cool thing about yoga is that it is as much of a practice of working on our mind and thoughts rather than just shapes we make with our body.

With the same discipline that I show up to my mat every day to breathe and move, I began to work on shifting my thoughts from "you're so selfish" to "you're doing what you need to do to support your family."

Every time "you're so selfish" arose, I would take a deep breath and repeat the reframed mantra: "you're doing what you need to do to support your family." There were many days where it felt like I spent the entire day reframing my thoughts. But, in time, I was able to shift away from the narrative that I was being selfish and truly accept and appreciate that taking time for myself is ultimately for my family.

When my son's birthday arrived, my new mantra empowered me to show up for my speaking opportunity without guilt, which in turn, enabled me to show up wholeheartedly for my family later on that day.

Mantra magic

The words we repeat have power, even if they are never spoken aloud. In the yoga tradition, repeated phrases meant to aid in meditation and prayer are called mantra. This comes from two Sanskrit words, manas- meaning 'mind', and -trava, meaning 'to liberate'. The Sanskrit language is sometimes called the Language of the Gods, as it is believed to have been created by Hindu god Brahma and then passed directly to rishis, spiritual sages. As such, many mantras are thought to be direct lines to the divine.

In the Western world, the term mantra has come to colloquially mean a repeated truism or statement. They are the things we say to ourselves over and over again. As such, they

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are not always positive. All languages are vibrational and therefore any words we say or think hold power.

Luckily, through awareness and dedicated practice, we can consciously shift away from mantras that might be harmful toward ones that are sacred or simply more kind.

The ancient texts, such as the Vedas offer many reasons to practice mantra such as a way to cleanse and still the mind. Modern science and brain imaging have given us ample evidence that this practice is beneficial, as well. It is an essential practice for practitioners and especially, practitioner parents.

Here are four science-backed, and parent-specific, benefits to using mantras:

Reduces anxiety: Despite mantra practice being around for millennia, research is somewhat nascent and limited, though a 2022 systemic review found promising results. Patients who practiced mantra showed a significant reduction of anxiety symptoms across a wide variety of studies.

Lowers stress: The same review also found evidence of stress reduction across studies, including in patients with a history of post-traumatic stress. This makes mantra a promising, non-invasive, low cost alternative therapy treatment for people in high stress situations, which parents know about very intimately!

Improved memory: A 2016 study looking at the brains of professional Sanskrit Vedic Pandits found significant structural differences from the brains of non-meditators, including more grey matter in the right hippocampus, which is related to memory. This is especially promising information for people with memory challenges — think 'baby brain' — which many parents face as they are tasked with thinking for the entire family and not just themselves.

May improve sleep: Kirtan, which is a call and response style chanting practice, was recently found to improve sleep and other cognitive functioning including mood and quality of life. This study found that even just listening to the chants had positive effects. As a parent, I will happily take one of each of those benefits please!

Mantra is not only highly beneficial, it's a very versatile practice. Unlike asana, which requires space for you to move your body, all you need is your brain. You don't even need to open your mouth or be in a quiet setting. You can repeat mantras silently wherever and whenever — meaning young parents needn't worry about waking up their baby. The simplest mantra you might start with is the sacred syllable, Aum. Aum is considered a pranava, an omnipresent sound that is all around us. Repeating it is like taking a swim in the cosmic sea. It's great for when you're feeling overwhelmed, like how many of us feel most of the time in parenthood!

Sarah Ezrin is an author, yoga educator and mama based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her debut book 'The Yoga of Parenting' (Penguin Random House-Shambhala) is out this month. Connect with her on Instagram @sarahezrinyoga and TikTok @sarahezrin

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Want to share the magic and wisdom of this ancient practice with others?
Then it's time to think about yoga teacher training.

You're in the right place. In this special report, we've got insight and tips from some of the country's top yoga experts to help guide you on your way. Even if you're just looking to deepen your own practice, and have no intention of teaching afterwards, a teacher training course can still be hugely appealing, offering a chance to immerse yourself in yoga alongside likeminded people who will become life-long friends.

Explore your motivations for why you want to become a yoga teacher, the types of courses available, read up on what it's like during the training, and learn about some of the career options and choices after graduation.

Get ready to supercharge your life, your career, and your practice. One thing is certain whatever course you choose: yoga teacher training is an experience that will change your life. Are you up for the challenge?

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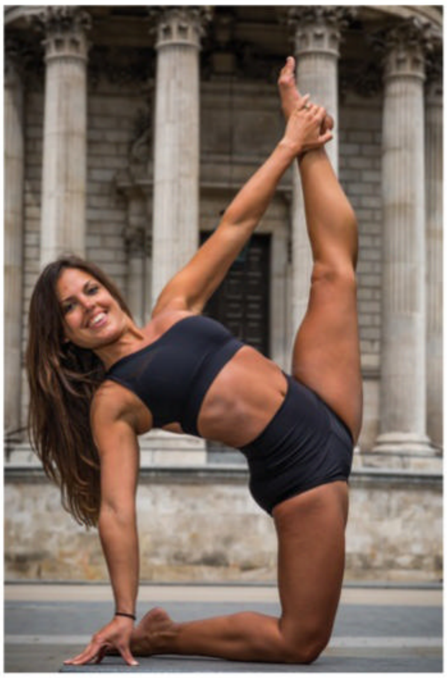


Are you ready for teacher training?

How to know when and if you're ready to embark on a yoga teacher training course. **By Sylvia Garcia**

How do you know you are ready for something? Is it a fleeting thought or a big passion for something that you want to learn more about? Either of these might ring true…and you might also find yourself somewhere in the middle. And those little voices of imposter syndrome can still make their way into the equation.

The truth is the idea of starting something new like enrolling onto a yoga teacher training course only really begins once you are ready. Despite feelings of doubt and uncertainty, subconsciously that curiosity has arisen because the timing is right and having the thought arise is the very first step.

> "Despite feelings of doubt and uncertainty, subconsciously that curiosity has arisen because the timing is right and having the thought arise is the very first step."

It is important to set realistic expectations for your training course. Will it teach you everything there is to know about yoga teaching? Probably not. Will it give you a good foundation and open up elements of a yoga practice that are new to you? Absolutely!

Undecided? Here is what I suggest:

- Look at who is teaching the course, the content, the focus points and the prerequisites.
- Check if the dates work with your schedule.
- What accreditation is offered and is it recognised in countries you want to teach in?

Photography by Jonny Moore, We Are Flamingo

You don't have to quit working and change your life completely once you commit to a yoga teacher training course. This can be a gradual process and doesn't even have to be something you do with the aim to teach. It's a fantastic way of really deepening your practice, learning about the history and philosophy behind yoga and delving into the anatomy and physiology of body and movement. It will show you the parts of yoga you are particularly interested in and can ignite new passions as well as highlighting areas that aren't enticing to you. If becoming a full-time yoga teacher is the end goal, find a course that will guide you through a progressive and realistic process to help you do so.

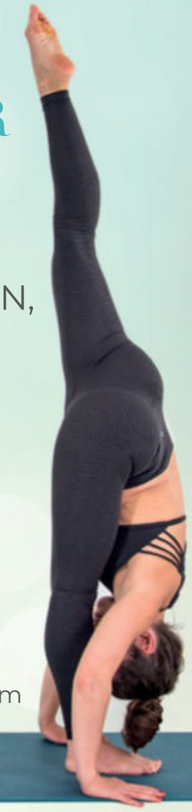
> "Take the pressure off having to make this a life-changing decision. If it feels right, go for it!"

Some questions you might ask yourself if you feel unsure:

- Do I feel passionate about my yoga practice?
- Do I feel like this is something I could be good at with the correct support and guidance?
- Do I talk about or want to talk about yoga with my friends and family often?
- Do I constantly look at people and think yoga could really help this person?
- Am I ready for a new challenge?

Take the pressure off having to make this a life-changing decision. If it feels right, go for it! Do your research, make sure you find a course that works for you and enjoy this next chapter!

Sylvia Garcia has been teaching yoga internationally for over 20 years. For more information about classes, retreats and teacher training email sylviagarciayoga@gmail.com or find her on socials @sylviasyoga



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Before

7 things to consider when choosing a yoga teacher training

Seven key considerations for all those contemplating teacher training.

By Vidya Heisel

1. Intensive, online or spread out over a number of weekends?

Carefully consider your own personal needs. An intensive three-week training can be a life-changing experience that you will always remember. You will live and breathe yoga for three jam-packed weeks.

If you are unable to take the time out, you might instead choose an extended training, close to home. The benefit of this is to have more time to study. The downside is that it may be harder to motivate yourself when surrounded by day-to-day chores and relationships.

A self-paced online training would be a final option. You will need to self-motivate and work hard. As a YTT trainer, who runs both intensives and online trainings, I have found that online trainings are not usually as effective as live ones, where the student is given ongoing in-person feedback. However, it will depend entirely on your own drive and motivation. In general, I believe that the intensive is a better format, if you can make the time.

> "It's important to consider the lead teacher's qualifications. How long have they been teaching? What trainings have they completed themselves? How many trainings have they run already?"

2. The quality of the teacher training is of prime importance

A very important thing to take into consideration is the amount of time the training has been running. In general, the longer a training has been around, the more refined it will be. Over time, the lead trainer will have ironed out all the kinks.

Similarly, it's important to carefully consider the lead teacher's qualifications. How long have they been teaching? What trainings have they completed themselves? How many trainings have they run already? How experienced are they?

If possible, don't choose a training just because it is inexpensive. You are investing in a potential career, so it makes more sense to go for quality over budget.

Check the testimonials of past graduates. Are they real people with photos or videos? You should be able to look them up online.

3. Can you try a class taught by the lead teacher online?

You need to find out if you enjoy the teacher and their teaching style. It's a great thing to do before signing up if you are able to do this.

4. Main focus and strength?

What is your main interest going into the training? Some students have a deep interest in yoga anatomy, others are really interested in learning about the spiritual dimension of yoga, philosophy and meditation. Check that the subject you are most interested in will be covered in depth, in the course you have chosen.

5. Style of yoga offered?

Is this the style of yoga you like to practice? Maybe you are looking for a very specific style, like Yin, or Ashtanga. Vinyasa Flow is a very popular dynamic style, with more freedom and creativity. Be wary of courses that offer multiple styles of yoga. In general, three weeks is too short to study more than one style of yoga in depth.

6. Level required

Find out what the requirements are to be accepted onto the training. Do you need to have been practicing for one or two years? Do you qualify?

7. Location and environment

Where is the training going to be held? What is the level of comfort and tranquility? What are the accommodation options? Study the location and make sure it offers the services that would allow you to fully enjoy the experience.

Vidya Heisel has been studying and teaching yoga for 48 years. She has been running five YTT programmes annually for 23 years. She owns Suryalila Retreat Centre (suryalila.com) in southern Spain and is the director of Frog Lotus Yoga International Teacher Training Programmes (froglotusyogainternational.com)

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w: FrogLotusYogaInternational.com / w: Suryalila.com

Before

How to find the right course for you

Important things to consider when selecting a yoga teacher training course. By Zoe Porter

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Style and content: Consider the style and content. When choosing a teacher training course it is helpful to think about your own goals and likes. Taking a course focused on the type of yoga you want to practice and teach will be far more enjoyable and relevant.

Location and budget: Training close to home may be more convenient, but the right content and teacher may be worth travelling further for. Course fees in the UK might be slightly more expensive than those in another country, but without the additional costs of flights, accommodation and food.

Intensives or long duration: Is the course intensive or spaced out over time? A course may be done in a few weeks or spread out over a few months. Intensive training is a dive deep where you can focus only on the training for a short period of time. A longer course allows you to better absorb and apply the knowledge, and make more progress with your personal practice.

Selecting the right format for you: What format is right for you? Teacher training courses now come in a variety of formats. Some are still fully in-person, some are hybrid (a mixture of in-person and online), some are live online, and some are pre-recorded. While online courses may be cheaper and more convenient, they will lack the quality and community in-person training can provide.

> "Course fees in the UK might be slightly more expensive than those in another country, but without the additional costs of flights, accommodation and food."

Accreditation: Make sure the course is accredited. In order to get insured to teach your training course needs to be accredited. The main groups accrediting courses in the UK are British Wheel of

Yoga, Yoga Alliance Professionals and Yoga Alliance. Their websites are a good starting point to start researching training courses.

Taster days: Meet the lead teacher and attend a taster day if available. It's important to make sure a training course is a good match on personalities as well as style. If you can't attend a taster day or in-person class or workshop, it is helpful to at least schedule an online meeting to get a feel for the lead teacher and ask questions.

Check the expected standards for applicants: There may be a minimum number of years practicing and you may be asked for a reference from your regular teacher, to attend a taster day, or to submit a practice video. Making sure all applicants have a strong base level, rather than accepting everyone, will ensure the training can be delivered to a higher standard.

Assessment: Understand how you will be assessed and the requirements to pass. Many accredited courses will have standards required to ensure that those graduating will be safe and effective teachers.

"Make sure you have enough time to devote to the course. As well as contact hours there may be homework requirements and the expectation to maintain a regular practice."

Take your time: Make sure you have enough time to devote to the course. As well as contact hours there may be homework requirements and the expectation to maintain a regular practice.

Additional support: What additional support is included, if any? Will the course include any business training or mentoring? What about other support packages?

Zoë Porter is a senior yoga teacher and teacher trainer pro living in the New Forest in Hampshire, where she offers training courses and Ashtanga, Rocket and Yin Yoga classes. She is a free spirit with a love for body art and spiritualism. Visit: ZoePorter.yoga

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Before

What makes a great **teacher?**

What are the ingredients you need to be a successful yoga teacher? **By Bea Teuten**

Be it in yoga or in any other discipline, people speak of great teachers as those who have made a significant difference to their lives, often changing something profoundly for them. Moving them to a new place, a better place. So, what makes these people so special?

As the Yoga Sūtras tell us, positive change is based on relationship and never more so than in yoga. Yoga itself is about transformation: being able to do more or act better than we could before, physically, energetically, mentally or emotionally. A true teacher inspires because as the student we trust them… and we trust them because this particular relationship has real care at its heart. The teacher has as their central purpose the wellbeing of their student having set aside their own desires and projections.

For this to happen, the teacher needs to 'walk the talk'. A teacher who wants to inspire and support students in the journey that is yoga must have experience themselves of the power behind the practice they teach. They need to be on that road themselves, working through self-awareness towards greater insight, both of themselves and of their students.

Thus, the true teacher needs clarity; to see the student with love and compassion and be able to hold them and inspire them to believe in themselves. The tools of yoga are broad and range from the well-known postures (āsana) and breathing (prāṇāyāma) featured in most yoga classes to sound work (mantra), visualisation (bhāvana) and meditation (dhyāna).

> "Thus, the true teacher needs clarity; to see the student with love and compassion and be able to hold them and inspire them to believe in themselves."

There are many stories about how truly special teachers such as TKV Desikachar or Professor Krishnamacharya were able to see the individual student in front of them with such clarity that in just a few minutes they could offer a practice which addressed that person's issues. Famously, Desikachar walked through a crowded waiting room at the Krishnamacharya Mandiram in Chennai and asked to see

> "A great teacher is able to support each individual in that class, adapting and modifying the practice, to ensure that each person reaps the benefit in a way that is most appropriate for them."

the gentleman with the stomach issue… without having seen any notes.

Whilst teaching one to one is the traditional model, today most people will learn yoga, at least initially, in a group class. A great teacher is able to support each individual in that class, adapting and modifying the practice, to ensure that each person reaps the benefit in a way that is most appropriate for them. The great teacher does not simply tell or show you *what* to do but also *how* to do it. They do not show you the bicycle and tell you to pedal; they hold the seat until you can pedal yourself.

Of course, knowledge, experience and passion are important, but at the end of the day true teaching rests on the bedrock of the teacher's care and clarity.

Bea Teuten has learned yoga since she was a child. She teaches in the tradition of Professor Krishnamacharya and his son, TKV Desikachar and is a yoga teacher and teacher trainer, yoga therapist and Vedic chant teacher. Her focus is on the individual, recognising that each and everyone is wonderful and unique. She was Chair of TSYP from 2019 - 2022. Visit: tsyp.yoga

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What type of course is best for you?

What's best: intensives or longer duration courses; local or overseas? **June Mitchell** explores the pros and cons

Over many years of being a full-time yoga teacher I have done both intensive, longer, local and overseas trainings. The first was 12 months in 1976-77 at the Scottish Yoga Centre in Edinburgh with William Mowat Thomson, an outstanding yoga teacher and human being, trained in India in the Sivananda tradition who introduced yoga to Scotland in the 1960s and 70s.

There followed many weekend courses with Iyengar teachers in the 1980s and the next official teacher training I did was with Dr. Robin Monro's Yoga Biomedical Trust in the early 1990s when he set up the first UK teacher training about Yoga for Low Back Pain with distinguished Indian orthopaedic surgeon and yoga teacher, Dr. D Dongaonkar.

The course I did was several weekends over six months at Newcastle University and it is now well established as the evidence-based Yoga for Healthy Lower Backs (yogaforbacks.co.uk).

International trainings

At the end of the 1990s, some yoga students/friends and I went several summers to YogaPlus in Crete and so enjoyed practicing Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga. I subsequently met Paul Dallaghan, a certified Ashtanga teacher (now of samahitaretreat.com) who impressed me hugely.

As I was keen to teach Ashtanga I wanted to ensure I fully understood this practice and so I went out to Koh Samui, Thailand in 2003 to do Paul Dallaghan's 200-hour four-week intensive teacher training.

In November-December 2004, I then spent five weeks at Sri K Pattabhi Jois' shala in Gokulam in Mysore and was fortunate to be there when all the family

> "My feeling is that shorter, intensive courses are great at developing your personal practice but better perhaps when you already have had a good number of years as a dedicated student or having previously done a longer training."

were teaching — Pattabhi Jois himself, Manju, Saraswathi and Sharath.

Make it personal

I have a lot of varied experience of yoga teacher trainings and my feeling is that shorter, intensive courses are great at developing your personal practice but better perhaps when you already have had a good number of years as a dedicated student or having previously done a longer training.

To go into it with little yoga experience or knowledge and think you will come away from a short course with the depth of understanding and practice that will allow you to be a confident yoga teacher is unrealistic.

To be a confident and inspiring yoga teacher, you need to fully understand what yoga is teaching us — physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually – and that of course takes time, practice and study. If not, it could lead to uncertainty and possibly loss of confidence. Then you can 'lose your bottle' and that's such a shame.

As a yoga teacher, it needs to be the essence of who you are; an understanding that is the core of what your life is about. There are no questions or doubts or not-knowing; it's spontaneous and flows from you like osmosis – wonderful really!

June Mitchell is course director at CYS Teacher Training (cysyogateachertraining.com)

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During

Finding an authentic voice in yoga teaching

Four pillars of authenticity for finding your true voice in yoga. By Hassan Hassan

What is an authentic voice, and why is it important?

An authentic voice is the yoga teacher's true and honest expression, reflecting their personality, beliefs, and experiences. It is an expression that comes from within, rather than something that is borrowed or copied from others. So why is this so important? Authenticity is crucial because it allows the yoga teacher to connect with their students on a deeper level. When a teacher speaks from their heart, they convey a sense of authenticity and sincerity that resonates with students, and so it becomes easier for them to connect, relate, and empathise.

Unfortunately, many yoga teachers fail to recognise that, and in the early stages of their teaching career many fall into the trap of imitating other teachers or trying to fit into a particular mould. They adopt a style or persona that is not true to themselves, and this can be sensed by their students, leading to a lack of trust and respect. In contrast, a yoga teacher who speaks authentically creates a safe and nurturing space, where the students can explore their yoga practice without judgment.

Finding one's authentic voice is a journey that requires self-reflection, introspection, and courage. Here are some suggestions for yoga teachers who want to explore their authentic voice, with the four pillars of authenticity.

Four pillars of authenticity for finding the authentic voice in yoga

1. Know yourself

The first step to finding one's authentic voice is to understand oneself. This requires introspection and self-reflection. Yoga teachers should ask themselves questions such as 'What are my values?', 'Why did I choose this profession?' 'What are my strengths?', and 'What are my fears?' By answering these questions honestly, the teacher will not only gain a better understanding of themselves and their unique perspective, but also appreciation of what they have to offer to their students. Once you know yourself on a deeper level, and you embrace your values and motives for teaching, you will be less likely to be swayed by outside influences, allowing you to trust your inner voice.

2. Embrace imperfection

No one is perfect, and this is true for yoga teachers too. Teachers should embrace their imperfections and use them to their advantage. Students appreciate teachers who are honest about their struggles and challenges. By allowing themselves to be vulnerable, the yoga teacher can create a sense of trust and relatability with their students, within the yoga class and beyond. The natural hierarchy of the student and teacher relationship that exists can and has been abused, usually in the circumstances where there exists a misconception that teachers are somehow perfect. By being open and humble about their own experiences on the yoga journey, students are reminded that teachers are just as flawed, which not only opens the channels for honest conversion but also helps keep us grounded and humble.

3. Be present

To find one's authentic voice, a yoga teacher must be present in the moment. This means letting go of distractions and being fully engaged with the students, focusing on them rather than being in their own thoughts. This can be challenging because, same as everyone else, yoga teachers will have good and bad days, and they may be preoccupied with many jobs, problems and projects. Life often leads us to live simultaneously in the past, present, and future, but yoga seeks to remedy this modern trait by combating the programming we have become accustomed to. Only when a yoga teacher is present can they tune into their intuition and speak from their heart, allowing them to access their most authentic self.

4. Letting go of expectations

Yoga teachers often feel pressure to perform or to meet certain expectations, whether they are imposed by themselves, or others, such as a gym or a studio where they teach. This can lead to a disconnect between the teacher and their authentic voice. To find one's authentic voice, a yoga teacher must let go of these expectations and trust in themselves and allow their intuition to guide them.

Why should yoga teachers use their authentic voice?

Yoga teachers and their students will forge deeper, more personal connections if the yoga teacher speaks authentically throughout the practice. The authentic voice conveys sincerity and genuineness, which resonates with students, allowing them to explore their practice in a safe and nurturing environment where they feel free from judgement. Furthermore, using an authentic voice helps to build trust and respect between the teacher and their students. When the students trust and respect the teacher, they are more likely to be receptive to the teacher's guidance and teachings, leading to deeper and more meaningful yoga practice.

Using the authentic voice is a powerful tool for yoga teachers. It offers benefits to both the student and the teacher, allowing mutually deeper connections and more meaningful practice for all.

Hassan Hassan is a senior yoga teacher and head of teacher training at Breeze Yoga. Find out more at: breezeyoga.co.uk

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What really happens on a teacher training course?

Will Lavin outlines some of the many physical and emotional challenges commonly experienced during a yoga teacher training

So you've decided that you're ready to embark on a yoga teacher training course.

Are you physically fit enough? Will the other students on the course be 'better' than you? Well, in theory 'yoga' should be for everyone, so whether you intend to teach extreme Yang or gentle Yin, you should be able to find an audience.

However, as yoga teacher training courses will necessarily need to teach several forms of asana, you may struggle if you expect to only practice gentle forms. It would be advisable to have this conversation with the course tutor before embarking. You shouldn't need to be able to flow through the Ashtanga Third Series, but you should have a proficient practice and a reasonable level of fitness.

> "But remember: there is no 'better' in yoga. You may be demoralised when you see other students flying around, but they may be missing different aspects that you excel at. Be confident in your own skillset"

But remember: there is no 'better' in yoga. You may be demoralised when you see other students flying around, but they may be missing different aspects (pranayama, alignment etc.) that you excel at. So never compare, and be confident in

your own skillset.

Also be aware that a yoga teacher training course by definition will not be designed to teach you yoga. It will be geared to teaching you *how* to teach yoga. There will be many asana practice sessions, but you will find that the emphasis is different from classes you have attended previously — the tutor will be teaching you with a view to you teaching the practice yourself.

There may be a range of different yoga styles taught, and you have to decide which style you will feel confident teaching. The tutor will teach you a 'script' of instructions, but you will need to develop your own vocabulary too. You should also be taught that a yoga teacher is not someone who lays out a mat at the front of the class and runs through their own practice. Instead, you will need to always observe your students. The most important aspect in teaching is to ensure that everyone attending is safe (including yourself).

> "There will be a lot of laughter, and maybe a few tears, but the lessons learnt and friends made should last a lifetime."

You will learn that yoga is not just about asanas. Every course should include all the other components (Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga), and will study important texts such as the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, in order to highlight the historical and philosophical aspects of the practice.

Don't underestimate the amount of studying required on the course. A good course will expect you to read the course books and discuss as a group during the in-person modules.

But also be mindful that although you will have studied anatomy, philosophy and history, you will not be qualifying as a doctor, philosopher or historian. You will need just enough of these elements to be able to provide relevant information to your future students.

There will be a lot of laughter, and maybe a few tears, but the lessons learnt and friends made should last a lifetime.

Will Lavin is a senior yoga teacher and trainer, and runs regular teacher training courses. Visit: YogaTTS.co.uk

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During

Making yoga a part of your life

Integrating your teacher training learnings into your way of life.

By Georgina Yadav

If we look at the ancient yogic texts, yoga has very little to do with physical postures. It is a way of life that aims to create a union between your body, mind, and spirit. It is a system that can be practiced every day off the mat, which can free us from the everyday afflictions of our mind, ego, and physical body.

It is a lifelong journey of self-inquiry to get closer to the truth of who we really are, free from all the layers that we have built up around us. Yoga is about who we are in the world, how we show up in our relationships, and how we deal with life's challenges. It's a willingness to look at the darker, inner aspects of ourselves and put in the work to shed decades of conditioning, limiting beliefs, and often emotional trauma.

It is not always pretty or easy. It can be hard, draining, emotional, and difficult to examine the less attractive sides of ourselves and to do this inner shadow work. But if you adopt the teachings into your life, you can experience true transformation beyond the mat.

Stepping onto your mat each day is a great place to start, as are practices such as meditation, mindfulness, pranayama and yin yoga to maintain your centre and calm when circumstances around you may be stressful and challenging. But being willing to learn more about yourself in your everyday interactions with others and taking self-responsibility for your actions, reactions, prejudices, and expectations is where the magic of yoga occurs.

A starting point for how to take learnings from a yoga teacher training into your way of life is through the Yamas and Niyamas. They form the foundation of what it means to make yoga a way of life and guide us in how we treat and relate to other people and how we take care of ourselves. They can be seen as a moral code, or 'right' way of living, that provides a framework for our spiritual development.

The Yamas

Ahimsa: non-harming, non-violence. This applies to our words, thoughts, and actions towards ourselves and others including animals.

Satya: truthfulness. Not just in what we say or think but in realising that our opinion may not be true to others which can be difficult for us to accept.

Asteya: non-stealing. This doesn't just relate to possessions but can be ideas, teachings, energy, or time. Give more than what you take.

Brahmacharya: right use of energy. Many people assume this means you have to be celibate but it's also how you choose to use your energy. Be more mindful about how you spend your time – what you watch, who you spend time with, and how you can reduce stress.

Aparigraha: non-possessiveness, non-greed. Ask yourself: do I actually need this or is it a desire?

The Niyamas

Saucha: purity of body and mind. Looking after our physical body and keeping our thoughts uncluttered to maintain a sense of calm and ease. Learning not be driven by emotions.

Santosha: contentment. You don't need to be perfect, nor does your life. Accept the present moment rather than living in the past or future, and not wish for circumstances or people to be different from what they are.

Tapas: self-discipline. Committing to ourselves, our practices, and our path even when it becomes challenging.

Svadhyaya: self-study, inner exploration. Being willing to look at ourselves, our thought patterns, behaviours, judgements, and actions.

Ishvara Pranidhana: surrender to a divine presence. Surrender to the idea that everything is for our higher good. An ability to tune in to our own divine wisdom and guidance (intuition) and allow that to guide us in our decisions.

Leaving a yoga class with a post-yoga high can be instantly gratifying which is why many practitioners are drawn to it. But practicing the Yamas and Niyamas in your daily life will bring lasting and deep change. They will help you shine a light of awareness on parts of yourself that you may have not wanted to acknowledge previously. They will lead to increased self-awareness, healthier relationships, and a deeper sense of calm and gratitude in your life.

Georgina Yadav is the founder of Inner Yoga Training. (inneryogatraining.com) @inneryogatraining

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During

Dealing with the inner demons

How to deal with your own mental and emotional issues and baggage whilst on a yoga teacher training course. **By Jo Moules**

Isn’t it exciting? You have made the decision, done your research, chosen your course and are immersing yourself in all the new knowledge, tips, tools and practices that are going to change your life!

But then, something feels off. You are feeling anxious. More emotional. Why is everything the instructor saying annoying you? Why are you crying? What is this aching in your body?

Well, congratulations my friend, as you are currently in the all-important ‘processing phase’.

You already know the power of yoga. It heals trauma, mental anguish and the body. Therefore it makes sense that while going through a teacher training course a lot of ‘stuff’ is going to come up for you.

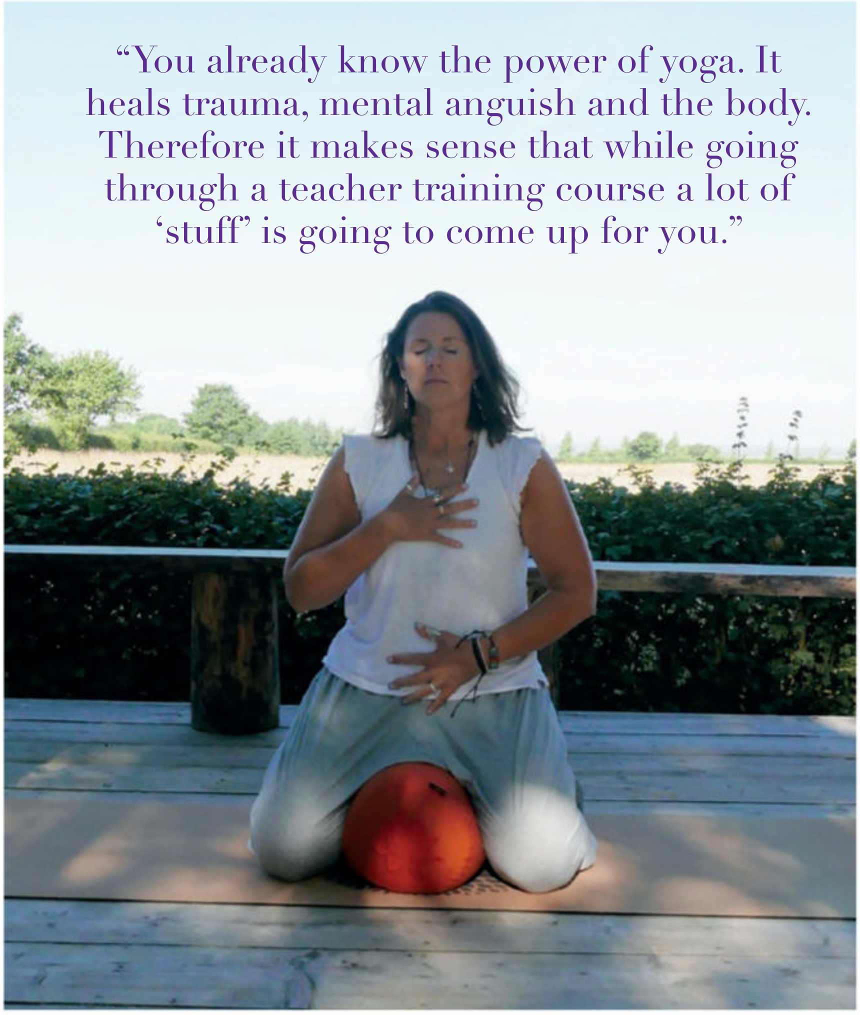
You will physically be practicing a lot of yoga as well as the theory. However, the theory also brings up emotions as the very nature of yoga forces you to ‘self-study’.

Added to the fact that your fellow trainees will also be processing their own emotional issues, is it any wonder that you have this lovely melting pot of emotions and healing around you and you have hit this uncomfortable wall?

Here are some ways to deal with the mental and emotional issues that come up whilst on a teacher training.

Trust the process

As the wobbles or emotions are bubbling to the surface, trust that this is perfectly



“You already know the power of yoga. It heals trauma, mental anguish and the body. Therefore it makes sense that while going through a teacher training course a lot of ‘stuff’ is going to come up for you.”

normal and expected. It means that you are evolving and growing. A teacher training course can be very powerful, and this may not be the only one you do, so be prepared for this to happen and know that it means you are on the right path.

> “The yoga got you into this emotional state, it will get you out again. Use the yoga, meditations and quiet time to be with the feelings that you are experiencing.”

Use the yoga

The yoga got you into this emotional state, it will get you out again. Use the yoga, meditations and quiet time to be with the feelings that you are experiencing. Yoga is so nourishing and healing that to transition through this phase, you will need to go further inward and discover yourself. Journal, move, breathe and meditate – this too shall pass.

Lean on those around you

As mentioned before, your fellow trainees will also be processing their own issues, so lean on each other, share your experiences. But remember that no one is there to fix you or you to fix them, just to hold you as you go through it. And equally do the same for them.

You will go through mental and emotional issues as you train, but be comfortable in the knowledge that it is through this learning that your greater wisdom is uncovered, and ultimately, having dealt with and faced your own baggage, makes you a stronger, more powerful teacher in the long run.

Jo Moules is a Yoga In Schools facilitator and the founder and CEO of Itsallyoga.co & Jo Yoga for Children. To connect with her and find out more visit: realjoyoga.com

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During

The reality of teacher training

What teacher training journey looks like at Tall Trees Yoga & Pilates in Doncaster. **By Michael Hammond**

Tall Trees has been open as a yoga studio for 10 years and running a teacher training programme for the last two years. This innovative programme was designed during the lockdown period by studio owner Michael Hammond with lead teacher, Karen, who heads the training. Both went to great lengths to ensure it was original, exciting and inclusive.

They took inspiration from the studio's name 'Tall Trees' and ensured that the foundations of yoga were grounded in tradition, giving the students strong roots from where they could grow and flourish as individuals. All students are encouraged at this early stage to work as a group on foundation postures, identifying each other's strong points and areas that need extra help.

Students are then encouraged to explore different yoga practices and branch out to the styles that resonate with them. It achieves this by fully embracing the skills and knowledge of the 16 teachers that work within the studio. This year, this has included presentations on diet and fascia, among others. One of last year's students also returned to present a workshop on ayurveda — a case of the fruit returning to the tree.

On a Tall Trees teacher training programme students get a one-to-three teacher-to-student ratio (as course size is limited to six students) plus a personal mentor for added support.

A social media group is set up amongst the students so all are in regular contact between course modules. Throughout the programme, students are reassured they are on track through regular personal

tutorials. Students are also encouraged to keep a reflective diary and many will often share their reflections so each individual journey is shared between the group.

> “The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.”
> Nelson Henderson

The programme is delivered from Tall Trees at Woodfield Park, Doncaster one full weekend per month over a 12-month period. Doncaster is centrally located within the UK, with great road and rail links. Woodfield Park is also an ideal place for a yoga studio; the air is fresh, maybe because the studio is surrounded by some of the tallest trees you will find in South Yorkshire, or because of the abundant flowers and plants. Maybe it’s just a trick on the mind as the sounds of the city disappear into the background and you automatically begin to relax and breathe deeper when inside the studio space.

Natural sunlight floods into both studios via windows on all sides, through which a cool breeze flows in the warmer months. There is a beautiful Victorian tea room on site and students and teachers always go to lunch together to further bond as a group.

A yoga teacher training course is extremely intense and can be challenging when you are also trying to balance your everyday life alongside it. At Tall Trees, the aim is to minimise this by giving students an unprecedented support network so they are able to enjoy this incredible journey and make fabulous memories and friends that will last a lifetime.

Michael Hammond started his yoga practice over 20 years ago. He started out as a competitive body builder and moved onto power lifting and martial arts, before discovering Ashtanga yoga and, later on, Rocket Yoga. He is the founder and proud owner of Tall Trees Yoga & Pilates Studio (talltreesyoga.co.uk)

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Getting class confident

Taking those first steps to becoming the great yoga teacher that you are.

By Joanne Moules

You have done the training, got the certificate and are buzzing to share your knowledge. Now it is time to get over the nerves and put your skills into practice. Getting class confident is a three-way balance of planning, flexibility and 'faking it'.

Every teacher's class you have ever sat in, has experienced a crash of confidence at some point in their career. But with your training behind you, you have all the foundations ready, you just need to integrate these few points:

1.Planning

Have a theme or focus to give you a centre point to come back to. Do you have a goal posture to work towards or a piece of philosophy to focus on? Have all your sequences ready and plan any music ahead of the class. This will ease the pressure and help you feel more confident as you deliver your class. It doesn't matter if you go off on a tangent (see point 2!).

2. Be prepared to be flexible and change your focus

During one of my trainings, the trainers specifically told us to misbehave and throw in sudden unexpected heckles to ensure our colleague was present and 'thinking on their feet'. If, during the class, you are acutely tuned in to yourself and your students, don't be afraid to veer away from your chosen plan. No matter how much planning you do, you can never be prepared for what your students may bring to the class. Perhaps a student is going through a break up and some heart healing is required rather than the handstand workshop you had planned, or maybe they are overworked and stressed so a more yin-style class is needed. There is no such thing as perfect, so have your plan, but be ready to be flexible too.

3. Faking it

You know the saying, 'fake it until you make it'. As I mentioned, every teacher has experienced nerves at some point. Remember, through your training, you are equipped with all the tools and techniques to calm those nerves. My first ever class was in a school assembly! The fear of standing in front of a whole school! I was frozen with fear, so I used it in the class. I knew that I had to shake the fear off so we did a big shake out to loud music. It relaxed me and the children loved it. Think about what you need and use that to calm you and move forward through the class. Your students will feel equally relaxed when they see you relax. Then, as they relax, they will instil the confidence in you to be the incredible teacher you are – it is a beautiful energetic circle.

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> "No matter how much planning you do, you can never be prepared for what your students may bring to the class."

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Developing your own personal teaching style

How to find your inner voice as a newly-qualified yoga instructor.

By Kelsey Taylor

Whether you have just completed your first yoga teacher training or have gone on to undertake further development, sharing your new knowledge in a comfortable and authentic manner takes time and practice. Teaching styles vary and are influenced by an individual's life experience, personality, and confidence.

When you start to teach any new class, it might feel a little daunting, especially if there are other yoga teachers in your area, but don't be tempted to compare yourself to them or imitate their style. Everyone has different preferences: one teaching style might be beneficial for one student, but not another. It's good to know that whilst a student might attend your class for the first time because it's convenient, the reason they return is you.

Your teaching style will continue to evolve so don't be in a rush to figure everything out all at once, what is important is setting time aside on a regular basis to know who you are as a teacher, listen and observe how teaching makes you feel and modify when something doesn't feel authentic.

Connecting to your inner voice can be explored time and time again, through your own yoga practice. Regular meditation and self-enquiry will allow you to connect with and honour your values, beliefs and personality. Simple questions to

> "Connecting to your inner voice can be explored time and time again, through your own yoga practice."

explore are: Who am I? Why do I want to teach? What do I enjoy about teaching? How can I support my students?

Listen and observe

Every time you teach it is an opportunity to learn, grow and develop. Sometimes you will feel good, and you will want to recreate the magic, whilst other times things do not go as planned, you may feel out of your comfort zone and vow never to repeat the experience.

What to be aware of:

- How do you feel before, during or after a class?
- What do the words/language you use feel like?
- How do your students react?
- Go with your gut: don't be scared to say 'no' if a teaching opportunity doesn't feel right.

Modification

We naturally offer our students modifications to improve their experience. Making small adjustments can help us feel more comfortable with our teaching. Some modifications evolve organically, whilst others will be conscious as we react to what we know and observe within ourselves.

Managing conscious change

- What and why do you want to change?
- Don't be scared to try new things.
- Practice in private before you try in a group.
- Ask for feedback – but be aware you are not going to please everyone.

These reflections will allow you to stay true to yourself, teach from the heart, feel confident, and attract like-minded students.

Kelsey Taylor is a senior yoga teacher and teacher trainer based in Staffordshire. She runs courses and training on women's hormonal health and wellness. Find out more at: flowwomenswellness.com

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Maintaining your studentship

Yoga is a life-long adventure, which makes it so important to keep our learning going long after we complete our initial teacher training. By Selena Garefino

So, you've completed your 200 or 500 hours of training — an amazing achievement — and you've become a skilled and effective teacher. Now what? Keep going! I promise there is more.

A certification is not a finish line. It is an invitation to life-long engagement with everything teachings have to offer. Maintaining your studentship is paramount to staying inspired, to serving your students and to nourishing your own practice.

But how do you stay committed to your studentship? How do you stay hungry to learn?

Let's liken it to physical hunger. When you are physically hungry, you eat, you become full, and you no longer crave food. With learning and spiritual practices, it is the opposite. When you do not eat, you lose your hunger. When you eat, your hunger grows. Continuing education as a teacher will keep you growing, ever hungry for more.

When my teacher was a young man living and studying in southern India, he was taken in by a brilliant teacher we lovingly call 'Appa'. Every night for many years, when they closed the texts they had painstakingly translated, completed the puja, and chanted the mantras, Appa would say: "If you wish, we can carry on tomorrow."

My teacher says that "learning is an invitation and never an obligation." Like his teacher before him, every time my teacher and I conclude our time together, he extends the invitation to me: "If you wish, we can carry on tomorrow."

The invitation to engage with your learning is not about chasing certifications and titles but is a reflection of your reverence for yoga. It is a commitment to taking your seat, to grow your gnarled roots deep and wide, so that you may offer something outward to nourish your community.

Yoga is an ocean so vast you will never find its bottom or its shores. The yoga tradition teaches that three-quarters is always unseen, that there is always more. Do not let this deter you. Let it excite you.

Your pursuit of continuing education is what will keep you fascinated and engaged 10 years, and then 20 years, into your teaching. It is what will keep the act of cuing a downward facing dog exciting and inspired.

When we become the 'one who knows' we lose our curiosity. That is a descent into trading our humility for certainty, and to lose our humility is to lose our awe. When we lose our awe, things become dull and what we once loved becomes drudgery. Teaching yoga becomes just another task instead of a devotional offering.

Continuing education of the deep well that is yoga will keep you in awe. It will keep you inspired and imaginative. It will move you beyond remedial practice toward an ongoing, expanding dialogue that can nourish a lifetime.

Ongoing education will also keep you free from dogma. Dogma stunts growth and can lead to authoritarian blindness, to clinging to certain ways of doing things at the expense of unending discovery. We all know the saying that "the more I know, the more I know I know nothing." Continuing education is an invitation to breathe fresh life into and to make new your practice and offerings. It will keep you open to other ways of thinking and being.

Beyond these soulful reasons to pursue continuing education, there is the practical one. Our collective knowledge is growing leaps and bounds. In the last decade, we have discovered so much about the body that was previously unknown. Much of it can, and should, inform the way we teach and what we teach. It is important that we continue to be well educated about big shifts in our collective knowledge of the human body and movement, the nervous system, and trauma awareness so that we can better serve our students.

Remember that these 200- and 500-hour designations are a modern and arbitrary invention. They're not a stamp of completion.

Keep going. This is your yoga. Don't let up.

Selena Garefina is the host of the Mapping the Self podcast, a yoga and interdisciplinary movement teacher, life coach and writer; she offers a practice that is pragmatic, magical, and pragmagical to help you author your life, live from your heart, and move from grace. Visit: selenagarefino.com

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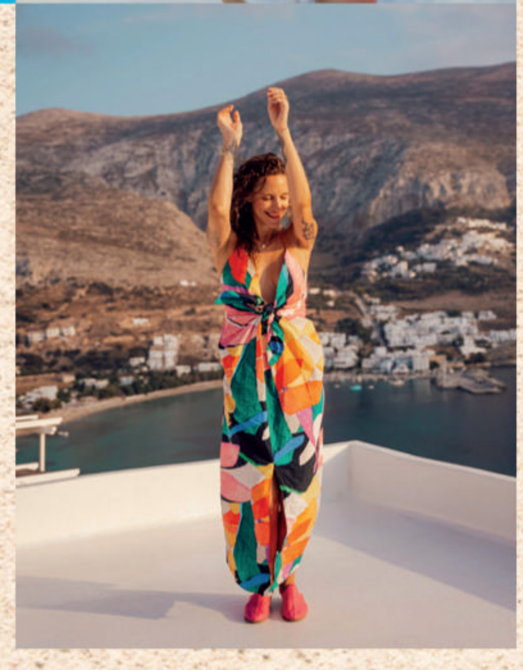

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Becoming a menopause yoga teacher

Learning the yoga wisdom to help others
at one of life's most challenging times.

By SueYen

Menopause is a natural and transformative stage of life that all women go through. Yet, it is often surrounded by fear, shame and misinformation. As yoga teachers, we have a unique opportunity to support women through this profound and important life journey, to guide and support students with compassion, authenticity and love.

Modified yoga practices can be highly effective in managing the physical and emotional symptoms of menopause of which there are many! Practices which include specific pranayama, meditations, Yin and Restorative style yoga can help regulate the nervous system, calm the mind and lower stress levels. When stress is better managed it reduces cortisol, which in turn regulates and restores the balance of hormones. This harmonises the whole self and benefits the management of menopause symptoms.

Flow movements in Vinyasa and Hatha yoga can help with specific symptoms such as sluggish digestion, weight gain and brain fog. It is all about striking a balance and tailoring menopause yoga classes to meet the needs of your students. A symptom such as the notorious hot flush can sometimes start with a precursor of an 'electric shock'. When we share information such as this, it educates women to recognise these signs. A hot flush can be better managed or even dissipated through calming and cooling breathing exercises along with drawing into a mindset of a learnt meditation or positive affirmation. As with most things in life, we must practice to develop skills and tools to draw on the wisdom when needed.

> "As yoga teachers, we have a unique opportunity to support women through this profound and important life journey, to guide and support students with compassion, authenticity and love."

If the body has been holding onto past stress and trauma upon entering menopause, it can manifest at this time as unresolved issues which surface as symptoms. By recognising the physical symptoms and identifying the possible underlying emotional patterns, women can engage and reflect with deep introspection, taking the opportunity to find clarity through profound questions about life purpose and the true essence of how the spiritual journey of menopause begins.

Indeed, menopause yoga is so much more than symptom management. It is about holding a safe space and creating community in which women can connect with their deepest selves and explore the spiritual dimensions of their menopause journey. By using specific language that acknowledges its challenges and complexities, yoga teachers can establish a sense of trust and safety that allows women to explore their experience with deep authenticity and self-love.

It is estimated that 13 million women in the UK alone are currently experiencing the life transition of menopause. By offering specific yoga practices, classes and workshops especially curated for menopausal women, yoga teachers can empower and educate their students to feel supported, seen and heard during this important phase of their lives.

Come and meet SueYen at the OM Yoga Show in London this October. SueYen is the founder of Triple Goddess Yoga, a menopause yoga platform. For information on the 40-hour 'Yoga and the 36 Menopause Symptoms' teacher training, visit: triplegoddessyoga.com

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Where can I teach kids yoga?

Ideas for teaching children after certification.

By Gopala Amir Yaffa

Yoga for children has countless benefits. It Improves strength and flexibility, increases self-confidence and builds a positive self-image. By sharing the practice with children we can help to create a generation which is more peaceful and more kind, and make the world a better place, one child at a time. So where can you teach kids yoga? Here are some ideas:

Daycare centres

It is super fun to teach yoga to toddlers — like yoga playtime! Sing and laugh a lot and don't take anything too seriously. With lots of animal poses and some simple games, a 30-45 minute class is enough; when you see they are losing focus, start winding things down. Slow it all down with some guided imagery so they leave class peaceful and calm.

Schools

Schools are some of the best places to teach yoga. It is a great service to the children and also a much-needed one. Crafting meaningful classes, often to complement what they are learning at school, we can share life lessons and wisdom. Do it without long lectures, but through sharing circles, inspiring poems, asana and social interaction, encouraging this more stationary generation to move, play and stretch through yoga poses.

Community centres

You can offer kids yoga to different age groups or even family yoga for parents and children to attend together. Yoga can be a great social activity, a healthy and positive way to spend quality time together.

Yoga centres

At a dedicated yoga centre you can focus on the more peaceful elements of the practice, letting the space help you create the right atmosphere and induce a calming effect on the children.

Gyms

What parent doesn't want their child to stay fit? The issue is finding the time to do it. Kids yoga comes to the rescue! At the gym, you can take care of the kids, teaching yoga in a fun and engaging way, while the parents get to do their workout. At the gym you can keep it a bit more upbeat with a focus on staying mobile and strengthening.

Hospitals

Children who are experiencing illness or are recovering from surgery, and even children who are facing a frightening and uncertain future can benefit on all levels from yoga. On the physical side, yoga helps children to stay more mobile; on the emotional level, it is uplifting and mood enhancing. There is some research that shows it can even help with pain relief. You may need to adjust the practice to be done on a chair or in bed. If moving through yoga poses is too difficult, you can still practice yogic breathing, relaxation techniques and mindfulness.

Summer camps

Summer camps and day camps are always in search of fun activities to keep the children busy with — yoga is perfect for this. It's also a great way for the camp's organisers to market their offerings to parents. Focus on making yoga social with lots of yoga games, breathing games and mindfulness games, to help the kids experience community while playing and stretching in pairs and groups.

Libraries & bookstores

Yoga story time! Each week, pick a different book and enjoy story time with the children. Choose books that have lots of animals and objects in them, and do yoga poses each time they come up in the story. Finish with relaxation, breathing

or guided imagery, ideally related somehow to the story you have read.

Churches & religious institutions

While avoiding any religious connotations, including any Indian cultural elements in all other settings, when teaching at a religious institution you can use relevant elements from the appropriate tradition. When teaching at a church or a Catholic School, for example, you can guide the class around themes such as Noah's Ark, Garden of Eden, the creation story, Christmas or Easter. People always understand you best when you speak in their language. They feel comfortable with what is familiar to them.

Toy stores & children's hair salons

This is a fantastic way for you and the store owner to do some cross marketing! They get to promote an event that will bring customers to their shop, and you get exposure to new audiences that may be interested in continuing to practice kids yoga with you.

Hotels & retreats

Families on holiday tend to have more time for yoga, and offering kids and family yoga classes can be a profitable venture. You can either offer the classes on a regular basis, daily or weekly, or you can leave your 'yoga menu' at the hotel or resort and be on-call for private sessions. If you live in the right place, you can even offer a mindfulness meditation walk at sunrise on the beach or in nature, and a sunset yoga session to help wind down the kids from an active day. If the resort has a kids club, you can also try and be a part of that.

Birthday parties

Today, there is often competition between parents on who can run the most amazing birthday party for their children. Meet or talk over the phone with the parents or the birthday boy/girl to discover what things they like, then try to build the theme of your class around that. And, of course, celebrate the birthday boy/girl at every opportunity throughout the class!

Pyjama parties

The idea here is that parents can drop off their kids with you for a yoga pyjama party while they go out on a date. So cool! All the kids can come in their PJs, you do some sleepy time yoga with them, maybe have a vegan pizza, watch a movie with popcorn… younger children can fall asleep, or you can tell stories or narrate a guided imagery while they lie down and close their eyes. When the parents come and pick them up they are either asleep or very calm and all ready for bed!

Private classes

Here, you tailor a class for the unique needs of the child. They may need to work on fitness or weight loss, enhance their skills for concentration and learning, or process an emotional trauma.

Gopala Amir Yaffa is co-founder & wizard at Rainbow Kids Yoga Teacher Training (rainbowyogatraining.com)

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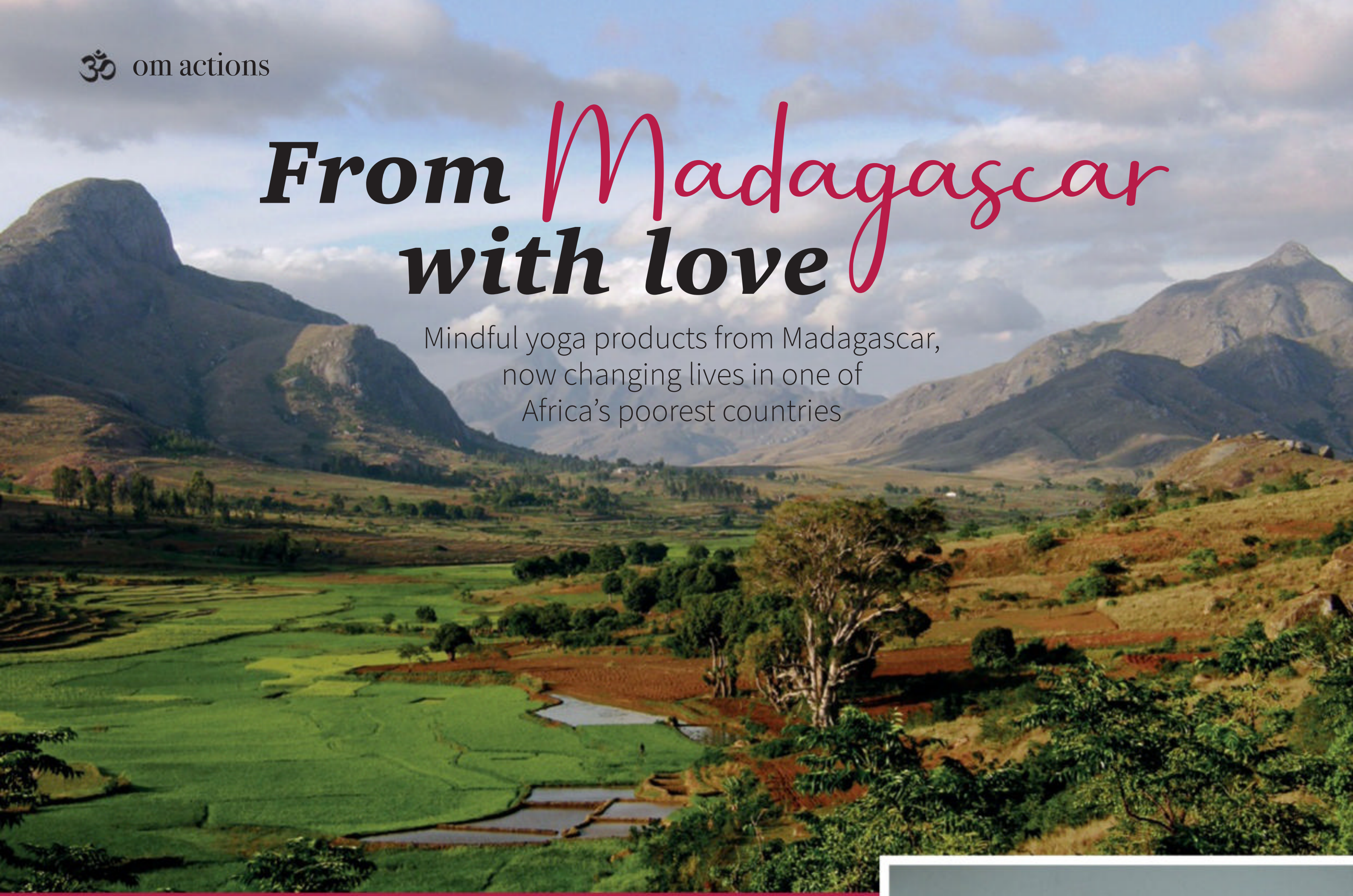


From Madagascar with love

Mindful yoga products from Madagascar, now changing lives in one of Africa's poorest countries

Ask most people to point to Madagascar on a map and they'd probably struggle. Well, it's actually one of the world's largest island countries, located off the south-eastern tip of Africa. It's also a nature-lover's paradise, filled with exotic and abundant wildlife — from lovebirds to lemurs — home to various endemic plants and creatures found nowhere else on earth.

But what's all this got to do with yoga?

A new start-up, Ladina Yoga (LadinaYoga.com), is looking to showcase this unique island nation, its vibrant culture and creative talent, by supplying authentic mats, props and other items to studios and customers across the UK and elsewhere in the world. It was set up by entrepreneur, Maysun Hassanaly, a qualified yoga teacher and also an engineer, originally from Madagascar, now based in London, where she's been living for the past 10 years.

"I grew up in a very rich cultural environment, being of Indian descent, Malagasy-born and French," she tells OM. "I remember seeing beautiful handmade crafts at every corner of the street and always wished Malagasy art and craftsmanship would be more widely known to the rest of the world."

The name of the company itself reflects its Madagascan origins and heritage.

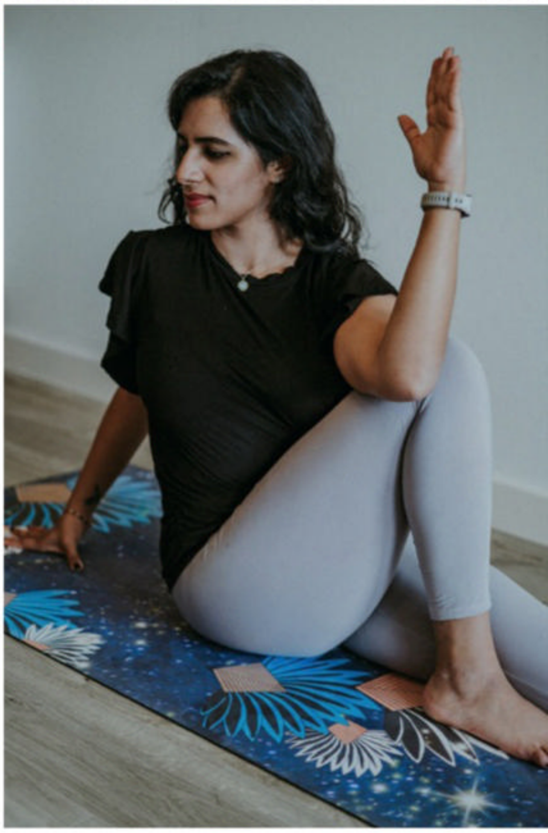
"Ladina means 'interwoven plants' — a Malagasy word rooted from the word 'Mandadina', meaning the act of braiding things together. At Ladina, we help people to create a connection between their yoga practice and the earth while empowering African artists and local communities."

Changing lives

Momentum is building after Hassanaly took the plunge to set up the company just a few years ago. At the end of 2019, she took a career break and, while in Madagascar, practiced yoga with her favourite teacher on Malagasy handwoven mats (tsihy). It sparked the germ of an idea.

"I loved feeling connected to my Malagasy culture while practicing yoga and thought how amazing it would be to associate my passion with my culture and being able to share it with the world. I then went to India to train as a yoga teacher and when I came back to London, Ladina was born."

It's very much a family-run business. The small team of four is led by Hassanaly herself, the founder and chief executive. Behind her, she has the support of her mum, Sahira Hassanaly, who acts as logistics manager, as well as the artists, Laurea and her husband Olivier, who also handle the manufacturing and operations side in Madagascar.



"We are the first yoga enterprise from Madagascar. Our mission is to promote African skills and fair trade through yoga. All products are designed in London, made in Madagascar, shipped to London — our main base — and then sent to customers around the world."

It's also doing some amazing things on the ground and impacting lives in Madagascar for the better.

"When I met Laurea, she and her husband (Olivier) were struggling to make it to the end of the month and Laurea would try to get sewing jobs in the hope of contributing to the family and their kids."

The couple have been married for 25 years and have two boys and one girl. Laurea grew up seeing her mother and grandmother sew and crochet art and is equally passionate about making Malagasy art known to others. Laurea also knows raphia crafting and sometimes helps in the production of the meditation cushions.

Since Ladina Yoga launched, she and her husband have been able to sustain a stable life and live in better conditions. At times, when the company gets a high volume of orders, Laurea calls in her husband for help as well as her friends, all women in her village living in the same conditions as she had been before.

"It really does take a village and we are proud to create employment opportunities in Madagascar, where sadly the majority of people still live in extreme poverty. At Ladina Yoga, our mission is to bring joy and support for yogis while empowering African artists. By purchasing yoga gear, people are really helping independent artists not only showcase their art to the world but also live in better conditions."

There's also an important environmental dimension.

Ladina Yoga has partnered with Ocean Sole, a non-profit in Kenya to produce recycled blocks made of flip flops. The flip flops are collected on beaches and waterways in Kenya, cleaned and transformed into beautiful yoga blocks. "Three billion pairs of flip flops are discarded every year. For every £20 you spend, Ocean Sole collects 145 pounds of ocean trash to clean our environment, create employment and support local communities and marine conservation."

Yoga ethos

Ladina Yoga blends its artistic skills and craftsmanship into a portfolio of authentic and natural-looking products that include brightly coloured yoga mats, bolsters, blocks, bags and mat sprays.

Crafted from eco-friendly materials, all the yoga mats are inspired by African designs, and made with natural rubber to offer the best grip and cushion for your practice. Perfect to make you feel stable, grounded and connected to the earth.

And for every mat purchased, the company plants a mangrove tree in Madagascar, which has earned the unenviable reputation as now being the fourth most deforested country in the world.

"We have crafted a range of yoga products that are simple, significant and sustainable. Therefore, purchasing these products not only contributes to the quality of life of our artists but also ensures these unique skills are not lost and will continue for the next generations."

The ethos and designs themselves also tie in with the founder's own yoga values and environmental concerns.

"Yoga is founded upon principles that promote awareness of one's sense of connection, unity, and interdependence with all things, including the environment. I believe that applying the principles of yoga on an individual level can lead to large-scale change in our relationship with others and our planet."

And it seems people are loving all things Madagascar. Ladina Yoga was recently selected to be part of the London Natwest Entrepreneur Accelerator, which provides access to advice and support from a community of other business owners.

It's a small, ethical yoga business with a bright future, mirroring some of its vibrant African yoga mat designs. Some of the products, especially the meditation cushions, also showcase the all-natural and more tranquil side of this exotic island.

So, next time you're seeking a bit of solace in the frenetic, fast-paced world, take a pause on a meditation seat made in Madagascar. Take a few breaths, and begin to equalise and rebalance those whirling thoughts, knowing that you're connected to the big picture — and playing a vital role in supporting the livelihoods of the people in one of the world's poorest countries.

Yoga is for every body

Your pictures. Your community

Kristine Marie Rost with her labradoodle Sigrid

Linda Ambrose on retreat in beautiful St Nectans Glen, Cornwall

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Lorna Fisher at Leith Hill and Tate Britain

Jackie Ngu in Cannes

We want your photos!

Send us happy shots, fun pics, great asana (or bad asana!), big smiley faces, anything at all – and see them in OM Magazine. It doesn't have to be you doing a yoga pose either. We want to see your yoga life: a pre-class group hug, a cup of tea after class, what you got up to at the weekend, send them all via email to: jane@primeimpact.co.uk

omtravel

Awe-inspiring retreats and ideas for yoga explorers

Bonaire Yoga Festival

Fancy an impromptu dream holiday this month? Then jet off to beautiful Bonaire, which is hosting its first ever yoga and wellness festival in June

Grab a map and see if you can locate Bonaire! If you're struggling, you're probably not alone…but you could be missing out on something quite special!

Bonaire is an incredibly wonderful yet still untouched island in the Dutch Caribbean. And this month, it will be hosting its very first Yoga & Wellness Festival, with the participation of international yoga influencer Laruga Glaser. The festival is to be held from 19 - 25 June, 2023.

Tourism Corporation Bonaire, in partnership with Bindu Yoga & Healing Centre, are organising the festival, drawing together all the island's yoga teachers and wellness talent in one special week.

Island-wide yoga and wellness facilitators, including restaurants and hotels, will offer special deals and events during the week, broadly across four core categories: heal, rejuvenate, relax and explore.

The festival will be filled with two specific yoga retreats: one by renowned Ashtanga teacher and influencer, Laruga Glaser, and the other by local yoga teachers focusing on gentle yoga practices.

Special wellness treatment programmes by participating island partners will also be offered during the week-long festival of events.

On the final day, it will be all things yoga again, where visitors can participate in an array of different yoga and meditation classes, workshops and other wellness activities, as well as enjoy music, visit healthy food stalls and browse a local market.

With a population of less than 23,000 — and with no traffic lights — Bonaire is the perfect getaway for yogis, nature lovers and travellers searching for rest and rejuvenation, known as one of the Caribbean's most eco-friendly islands.

The world's first Blue Destination, Bonaire is a blissful beach escape bursting with a history and culture as colourful as its architecture and tropical fish. The island's animal sanctuaries, National Parks and stunning landscapes, ranging from salt flat coastlines to cactus-filled stretches of desert, are a must for all nature lovers.

It's also the place to be for adventure seekers, with outdoor activities such as kayaking, caving and kite surfing, and spectacular coral reefs — it has long been recognised as a diver's paradise.

"Hosting an annual Yoga & Wellness Festival is a great method to promote the island as a premier destination for health and wellbeing," said Miles Mercera, chief executive of Tourism Corporation Bonaire. "This creates new market opportunities for companies in the yoga, wellness, health, and wellbeing industry, as well as the health food and lifestyle industries that have a natural connection to this sector." ॐ

The Yoga & Wellness Festival will be held in Bonaire from June 19 – 25, 2023. Find out more at: bonaireisland.com/yoga

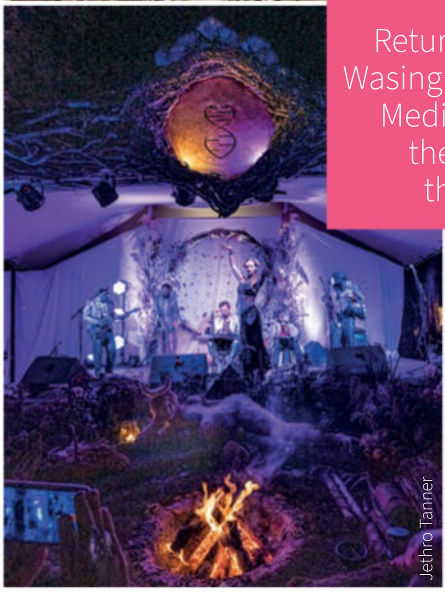
Cecelia Fog - @ceci_foga

Charlie Orellana - @raisedbyvolcanoes

Jason Purple

Medicine Festival

Returning to the natural landscape of the Wasing Estate near Reading for its fourth year, Medicine Festival offers an alternative to the archetypal rock n' roll hedonism that permeates UK festival season


Jethro Tanner

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Charlie Orellana - @raisedbyvolcanoes

Jason Purple

Medicine Festival, an alcohol and drug-free event, is the antithesis to the hedonism of Glastonbury and Reading, something that may strike a chord with all soul seekers.

The event takes place from 17-21 August, 2023 — and this year it will be bigger and better than ever. Expanding in response to popular demand for 2023, the event will increase numbers on site from 3,500 to 5,000.

Explore ideas from across the world in themed areas that will include:

- Soil & Soul: a space for learning permaculture and land-based skills.
- The Nest: a hidden woodland venue hosting cross-cultural folk music.
- Ubuntu: showcasing changemakers and undiscovered talent from the African Diaspora.
- Sacred Sound Temple: holding voice/ sound workshops and medicine music performances.
- Gwynns Grove & The Haven: for tantra, sexuality, men's/women's, queer, non-binary and LGBTQ workshops.

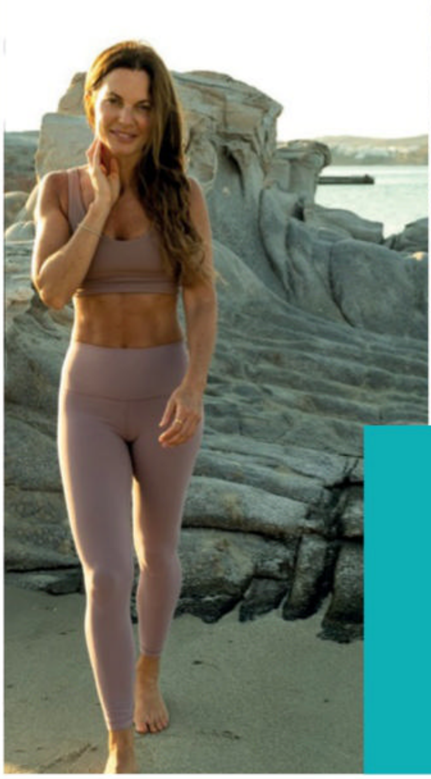
Ceremonies, rituals and healing workshops will be facilitated by indigenous leaders from across the world, including lauded 'Rockstar of the Forest' Ninawa Pai Da Mata, chief of the Huni Kuin tribe (Brazil), a gifted musician and shaman; Anthar Kharana from the Colombian tradition; Juan Carlos Taminchi from the Andean traditions (Peru); Christiana Aro-Harle from the Tuvan tradition (Finland); Tibetan monk, Tulku Lama Ahbay Rinpoche; and elders from the British Isles, such as Chris Park (Druidic tradition) and Annie Spencer.

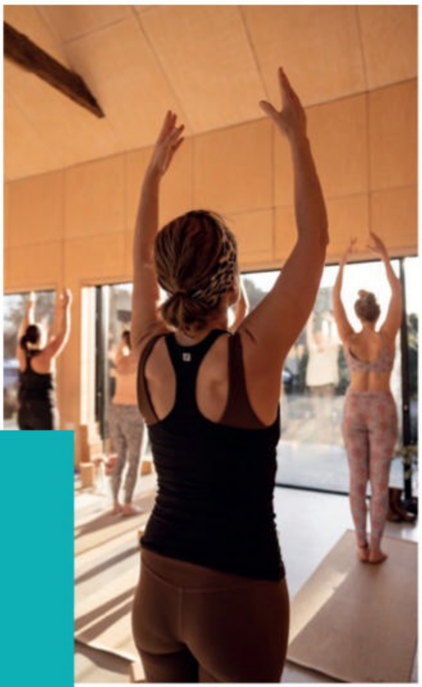
"With indigenous elders once again headlining our event, this year's festival will be a Mecca for wellbeing, ceremony, world music, dance, sacred activism, nature connection, multicultural arts and a joyful celebration of diversity," says Remi Olajoyegbe, the festival's co-founder.

"Medicine is proud to be part of a growing global movement that is reigniting the ancient ways, reviving natural healing modalities, pioneering land-based technologies, bridging cultures and embracing the interconnectedness of all life as we strive to revive our planet at this critical time." ॐ

Phoebe Montague Warr - @soulfocus_media479

For information visit: medicinefestival.com





Lazy days with Luul

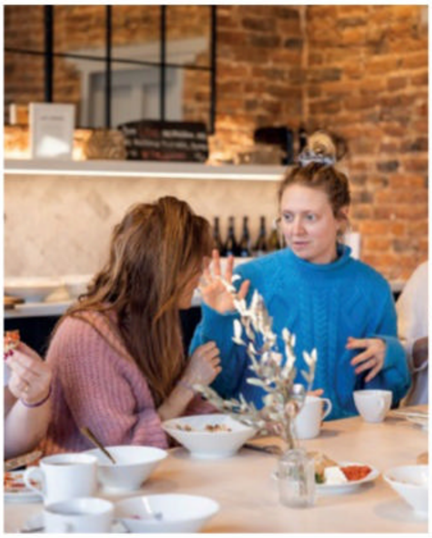
Introducing Luul: soul-reviving yoga retreats for women

Forget the lentils, uncomfortable beds and vows of silence, Luul is here to do yoga retreats differently. Expect next-level vinyasa and restorative yoga, delicious nourishing food and unique activities shared with a fabulous group of like-minded women.

Launched in October 2022 by former lawyer and experienced yogi, Stephanie Howard, these uplifting, soul-reviving three-to-six-day retreats take place in locations throughout the year in the UK and Europe.

Reset, reconnect and rest is the mantra during these thoughtfully-crafted wellness breaks.

"This kind of soul-deep break can genuinely change your whole life. Our retreats are a complete sensory experience, designed to empower you to fully show up again – vibrant, confident and renewed with fresh energy," says Howard.



She says many women feel guilty taking time out from their busy lives, with children, jobs and family responsibilities. Luul gives women permission to offload that guilt and press reset. Providing women with the space to breathe, grow and nourish themselves so they can return to their busy lives refreshed and revitalised.

Explore somewhere beautiful, move your body, eat yummy food and have those kinds of deep chats that get you feeling really excited about life.

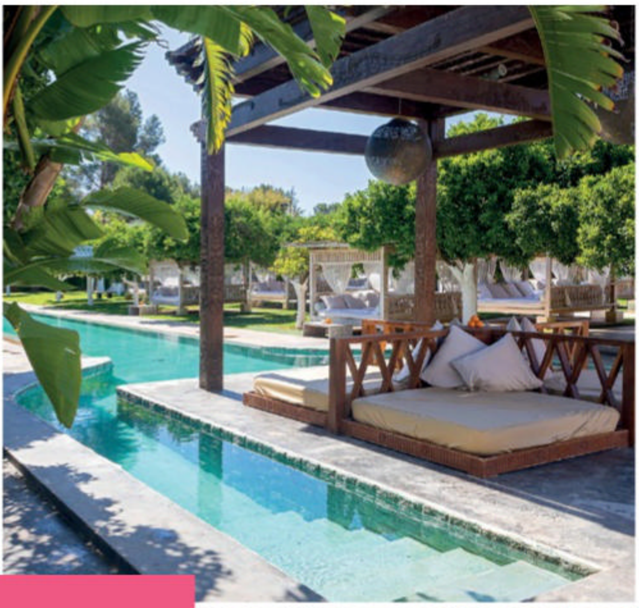
"Whether it's your job, your kids, your routines or the general demands that women face every single day, something has got you feeling less than your best self. I'm here to help women feel better in their body and in their head."

A typical retreat day includes waking to an invigorating and creative vinyasa yoga session with hands-on help from two instructors, and there's an optional yoga clinic for anyone who would like some extra bespoke attention.

After tucking into a hearty brunch, you'll have space to relax, discover the local area and potter around coffee shops, hop on a bike, grab a surf board or zip around on a speedboat to explore nearby islands. Or, if relaxing is more your thing, just sunbathe by the pool with a book.

Early each evening, there's a yin and massage class with essential oils, again, with two yoga teachers present, so you get double the adjustments and massage. Bliss! After all that fresh air and exercise you'll enjoy a farm-grown supper (and wine or a cocktail if you fancy it) before a blissful night's sleep in your comfy bed.

For retreat details and information visit: luul.co



Ibiza **spa time**

Atzaró Agroturismo Hotel has reopened its doors for the 2023 Ibiza season with the spa's mind and body nourishment in demand as always, right at the heart of the island

If you love yoga, Ibiza and enjoy a dreamy spa experience, then the Atzaró Agroturismo Hotel is for you. The site of a 300-year-old finca, the hotel launched to rapturous acclaim almost 20 years ago and has attracted visitors including Kate Hudson and Rihanna, among other celebs.

The Atzaró Spa is situated within the Atzaró Spa Garden, a perfectly manicured area of lawns, pool, botanicals, yoga pavilion, gym, treatment rooms, and spa facilities.

It's a stunning, sweet-scented natural setting: the Spa Garden brims over with fragrant lavender, rosemary, aloe vera, mint and orange trees, which supply the ingredients for the organic spa's products.

Inside, you'll find the yoga classes pavilion, a new gym, a sauna, hammam, changing rooms and lounge. Adjacent, there are beautiful private treatment rooms with hand-carved wooden doors and ceiling, plus views to the orange groves outside.

For 2023, there are some irresistible new spa and beauty treatments on offer, as well as a selection of uniquely self-care focused day experiences. These include a Healing Spa Day (€190pp) with daybed, pool, use of spa facilities, a yoga and wellness class, a massage with reiki energy healing for body and mind, towel, plus credit towards food and drink at the spa.

There's also a daily schedule of yoga and wellness classes for guests taught by some of the best teachers on the island. Two or three times a day, you'll find classes from yoga and to meditation and sound baths. There are also some great hiking and biking experiences to be had, where you'll soak up all the amazing nature that surrounds the spa and hotel.

Explore Ibiza's Atzaró Agroturismo Hotel at: atzaro.com

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The intersection of yoga and capitalism

The yoga industry is booming these days … and that means big business.

By Sarah Highfield

According to the latest research, the global yoga market is expected to reach a value of £176 billion by 2025. And that's just studios. Once retreats, clothing, mats and other accessories are accounted for, it could be worth eye-wateringly more. North American yoga fashion brand lululemon alone expects net revenues just shy of $8 billion (£6.5 billion) for 2022.

What emerged as a 'trend' in the western world during the 70s and 80s has miraculously adapted and evolved to keep up with a fast-moving wellness industry; and thanks to ongoing scientific research to back up the practice's mental and physical health benefits, yoga has time and again proven itself to be both effective and widely accepted.

Beyond that, with sustained growth comes commercial opportunities, and thus, large parts of the yoga industry are being heavily invested in, and some might say, exploited. At the extreme end, yoga studios in London are selling group classes for £40 per hour (I stress, group classes, not private); luxury brands are selling leggings for over £1,000 (if you don't believe me, take a look online), and high-end yoga retreats easily charge over £3,500 per week.

While it sounds shocking, I question, would all of these exist if there was not a market for them? Even at the less extreme end, costs add up. It's not uncommon for a yoga mat to cost over £120, or a yoga and brunch event in London to cost over £100.

Capitalism fuels competition and innovation, and as a result, what was traditionally a sacred practice is perhaps, at least in parts, being misappropriated and the very essence of yoga is being lost in exclusionary systems. (Of course, there is a much bigger conversation to be had here around class, race, and diversity, but that must be saved for another day).

Thankfully, as yogis, we have the freedom of choice to follow and support the brands, studios, teachers, and yoga paths that offer us authentic value and align with our beliefs. Commercialisation is simply a reality for yoga in the west that we must navigate. Through our own choices, yoga can still be nuanced and its narrative diverse; and if we bring our focus back to intention, then we will, largely, make the right decisions.

To finish, I will close with a helpful quote by yoga teacher, Molly Rae Benoit-Leach: "The more we focus on what brings us into union, rather than what makes us separate, the more we can be aligned with what yoga truly is." ॐ

Sarah Highfield is a yoga teacher, three-time OM cover model and regular contributor. Visit: yogagise.com or find her on Instagram @Yogagise and at the OM Yoga Show.

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